

30 Ways Parents Can Promote a Positive Nutrition Culture

1. Strive to eat meals together.
2. Show your child how much you enjoy nutritious foods and fun, physical activity.
3. Say “no” to super-sized portions when eating out.
4. Avoid telling your child to “take one more bite” or “clean your plate.”
5. Be the sports parent who speaks up about the nutritional quality of “treats” served after games and practice. Offer to put together a list of nutritious snack and beverage choices.
6. Ask your school if they can adjust the schedule to offer recess *before* lunch. Kids eat better when they are not rushed.
7. When the issue of fundraising comes up, ask the group to brainstorm alternative non-food activities and sales.
8. Ask your school to implement a local wellness policy that promotes a healthy school environment. The policy should cover several issues, including the school meal program, the use of candy as a reward in the classroom, after-school and student store food sales, etc.
9. Limit access to sweetened beverages at home. Promote water as the beverage of choice when thirsty.
10. Plant a vegetable garden at home or at school.
11. Ask your neighborhood school to buy locally grown food whenever possible.
12. Teach your child about agriculture by visiting local farms and farmer's markets. Stock up on locally grown produce as often as possible.
13. For short errands, walk or bike with your child.
14. Limit total “electronic time” (video games, computer, TV, etc) to a maximum of 2 hours daily.
15. Devise a healthy snack list with your child. Post on the refrigerator.
16. Teach your child to cook.
17. Assign children a “kids rule” night where they are in charge of menu planning, cooking and clean-up.
18. Involve your child at the supermarket by giving him a list of foods to find. Add a few new foods to the list each time (for example, arugula, papaya, risotto, quinoa, garbanzo beans or farmer's cheese).
19. Make sure your child starts every school day with a nutritious breakfast. A balanced breakfast should include foods from at least three of the five food groups.
20. Encourage your child to play outside whenever feasible. Play with her whenever you can!
21. On the weekend, live life instead of watching it on TV. Find a new place to hike, bike or run.
22. Find an indoor swim center that you can use all year long.
23. Discuss food advertising with your child.
24. Write letters to the advertisers that inundate children's programming with low-nutrition food and beverages ads.
25. Teach your child how to read and understand the information on food labels.
26. Challenge your child to create his own recipe.
27. Volunteer with your child at the local food bank or soup kitchen.
28. Sponsor a “nutrition drive,” emphasizing the donation of nutritious foods. Encourage the donation of non-perishable lean protein items, fruits and vegetables.
29. Study a different culture (or even your own) and learn more about their lifestyle and eating habits. Interview an older relative or visit the library or bookstore for authentic ethnic recipes and then prepare some new dishes together.
30. Enjoy eating a variety of foods! Celebrate the abundance of available food choices.



American kids are faced with easy access to large portions of food and beverages, an endless array of electronic entertainment choices and a mass media that bombards them with the message of over-consumption. But by taking small, positive steps, we can all make a difference. Here are 30 simple steps that make a big difference in child health and nutrition.