Keeping Our Kids Safe: How Parents Can Promote Healthy Choices



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Parents have a big responsibility to keep their children safe and healthy; and with every new day, it seems there are more challenges to face, including the potential dangers of social media and keeping young people safe on the roads. Taking steps to teach your children how to make healthy choices is essential, but many parents aren’t sure where to start in a sea of decisions. There’s a lot to think about, from diet and exercise to staying away from [drugs and alcohol](https://kidshealth.org/en/parents/talk-about-drugs.html), and it can easily become overwhelming.

Fortunately, there are several simple ways you can help teach your child to stay healthy and safe. Creating a family plan that everyone can follow is ideal first step; this way, your children will have support along the way and won’t feel singled out or pressured. For instance, you might make it a family initiative to eat a [well-balanced diet](https://www.wholefoodsmarket.com/meal-planning-tips-healthy-family), introducing whole grains, fruits, and vegetables into every meal and keeping junk food to a minimum. When this type of change is tackled by the entire family, it’s much easier for each individual to stick to it.

Read on for some great tips on how to lay the foundation for your children to make healthy choices now and into adulthood.

**Teach the benefits of good oral health**

The way we take care of our oral health also impacts many [other parts](https://www.mayoclinic.org/healthy-lifestyle/adult-health/in-depth/dental/art-20047475) of the body, so it’s important to start building those skills early on. Teach your child about the benefits of good oral hygiene and how to make sure they’re properly cleaning their teeth by flossing and brushing close to the gumline, as well as getting a checkup every six months. If you don’t have a regular dentist or need to find a new one, look to your dental insurance plan and [use an online search tool](https://areadentist.org/find-a-dentist-online/) to find the right match for your family.

**Road safety and insurance coverage**

For many parents, the thought of their child getting behind the wheel of a car is stressful enough without all the things that come with [teenage driving](https://www.nhtsa.gov/road-safety/teen-driving). Texting, alcohol abuse, and distracted driving all play into accidents among young people, so it’s crucial that you talk to your child about how to stay safe on the road and remain distraction-free. Talk about how to drive safely in all types of weather and how to stay focused on the road to prevent daydreaming and distractions. Make sure your teen is well versed on the insurance laws specific to your area, and plan ahead financially so that you have a way to cover the average annual premium of $160-$200 [if specific criteria are met](https://www.autoinsurance.org/how-much-is-auto-insurance-for-a-16-year-old/#Is_there_a_ballpark_figure_I_can_expect_to_pay).

**Get active**

Getting the family active can be a big job, but if you turn it into something fun you’ll have a much better chance of success. Think about how to [incorporate physical activity](https://letsmove.obamawhitehouse.archives.gov/make-physical-activity-part-your-familys-routine) into your weekly routine, such as heading to the park, going hiking, or playing games outdoors. Get some input from the kids to find out what they’d like to do, and encourage them to take up sports or [other activities](https://www.activekids.com/parenting-and-family/articles/11-offbeat-activities-for-kids/slide-8) whenever possible. This is a great way to get your children involved and keep them moving.

**Find a diet that works for everyone**

The right diet can help you feel energized and healthy, but young people often have a hard time making the [best choices](https://www.bellamysorganic.com.au/blog/12-ways-to-encourage-kids-to-make-healthy-eating-choices/) for themselves. A good way to help them out is to look for delicious, healthy ingredients and cook at home as much as possible. If you’re pressed for time, you can do some [meal prep](https://www.familyfreshmeals.com/2016/08/busy-mom-food-prep.html) at the beginning of the week, or get the kids involved in the kitchen (which is a great way to teach them responsibility) and let them help prepare dinner. Keeping healthy options around and limiting things like caffeine and sugar will prompt your kids reach for the better choice every time.

Keeping your child safe and healthy is a big job, but with patience and some preparation, you can help them find their own way to making the right decisions. Maintain open lines of communication so they feel comfortable coming to you with questions or problems, and always offer your support, even when you have trouble understanding. The work you do today lays the foundation for a better tomorrow for them.