



Budget-Conscious Tips for Parents: Teaching Your Kids to Make Healthy Choices

Children today are bombarded with images that glorify choices and lifestyles that sound great, but it's not enough to tell children what they should do, you have to display healthy behaviors and be a good role model. In other words, parents have to lead by example in order to make a lasting impression. There's no need to enroll in costly classes or consult self-help books — as a parent, *you* have the opportunity to show your children the importance of eating [healthy foods](#), getting plenty of exercise and staying away from destructive, addictive substances.

Eat Healthy Snacks

Help your kids make positive food choices by keeping healthy, [affordable snacks](#) on hand. [Fruit and nuts](#) are inexpensive snack options that kids tend to enjoy; in general, they're less expensive than sugary desserts or salt-laden chips. Avoid carbonated or sugar-heavy fruit drinks and provide filtered water instead, another budget-friendly move, or invite your child to help you make a batch of smoothies every once in a while, using healthful, inexpensive ingredients. And show your child what to watch out for on [food labels](#), like the need to stay away from foods high in sugar and focus instead on foods that are low in sodium and high in fiber.

Add a Multivitamin to Your Diet

Everyone can benefit from taking a good multivitamin. This dietary supplement [contains the necessary nutrients](#) that fill in the gaps that can be present in diets. For example, if your kids aren't getting enough Vitamin C from food and beverages, then you should add a multivitamin to their daily regimen. Multivitamins are also beneficial for the immune system, and when you buy ones that include probiotics, you're helping to improve your children's gut health. Children are likelier to stick to their daily dose of multivitamins if you buy the chewable type.

Make Exercise Part of Your Lifestyle

It can be difficult to convince children to go outside and play. Electronic games, streaming TV channels, and other high-tech temptations seem to have made the kid who loves to play hide and seek, or tag, a thing of the past. But playing outside is healthy and less expensive than purchasing a lot of expensive electronic equipment that will only lead to an inactive lifestyle. Encourage your child to throw the ball or Frisbee with you in the backyard.

If your kids are already into being active, make sure they have the sports equipment they need to play the sport they enjoy, including footwear and [activewear](#). Shopping at major retailers can often help you score the best deals. Remember, you can always recoup your money on sports equipment by taking it to a second-hand sporting goods store later.

Remember, kids who see their parents playing sports and leading active outdoor lifestyles are more likely to follow suit than kids whose parents don't exercise. The key is to expose your child to as many kinds of physical activity as possible.

Model Good Behaviors

Children tend to repeat the [behaviors](#) their parents exhibit, so be sure not to smoke, drink or use drugs around your kids. When they see you do something, it's automatically validated in their eyes, so make sure mom and dad don't inadvertently communicate that it's okay to do something that isn't good for you. For example, staying on top of your dental check-ups may help encourage your kids to do the same, as opposed to throwing a fit when it's time to head to the dentist. What's more, [given the connection](#) between oral health and problems such as depression and heart disease, keeping up with your dental appointments will ensure you're on top of your overall health and well-being.

Be Open

At some point, parents need to have difficult but important conversations with their children about thorny subjects like sex and [drug use](#). The sooner you begin having these discussions, the better it'll be for your children and for yourself. Having a difficult discussion now can lay the foundation for your child to make better choices later.

Ultimately, you are your most valuable resource when it comes to teaching your child about healthy, sustainable habits. Consider it an investment in a healthy life for your child — setting an example she'll want to follow. The best case scenario is for the entire family to support each other in healthy, positive habits.

Image courtesy of [Pexels](#)