RAISING HEALTHY VERMONTERS

A Guidebook for Parents on Helping Children Establish Healthy Habits
CONTENTS

Introduction ................................................................................................................. 3
Part 1. Establishing Healthy Habits ........................................................................ 4
Part 2. USDA: MyPlate .......................................................................................... 6
Part 3. Physical Activity ......................................................................................... 7
Part 4. Diseases and Treatment ............................................................................. 9
Part 5. Grocery Shopping ....................................................................................... 10
Part 6. Healthy Recipes ......................................................................................... 11
Resources ................................................................................................................ 12
Establishing healthy eating habits at a young age can have lifelong effects on your child’s health.

The State of Vermont has one of the lowest rates of childhood obesity in the country. While this statistic is encouraging, it does not make our communities immune. To maintain our low rate of childhood obesity, we should encourage our children to develop healthy eating habits and stay active.

It’s no secret that Vermont offers an abundance of farm-fresh produce and locally raised meats. Even so, some parents may find it challenging to convince their child to try new foods. It often takes several attempts until your child finds a new food acceptable, but the benefit of incorporating fresh, whole foods into his or her diet is well worth the effort. By helping your child establish proper eating habits at a young age, you are setting them up for a lifetime of healthy living.

Healthy Childhood
The earlier you introduce your child to healthy habits, the easier it is for him or her to continue leading a healthy lifestyle. Children are highly sensitive to their parents’ feeding and eating habits. Parents who model positive eating behaviors experience more success with their young eaters.

Healthy Adolescence
Adolescence is a time when your child may experience many physical changes. Their bodies need nutrient-rich food to fuel this period of rapid growth and development. This is also the time when children solidify their eating habits before reaching adulthood. Establishing or reinforcing healthy habits is just as crucial during adolescence as it is during childhood.

Healthy For Life
Once healthy eating patterns are established, they are likely to remain with children for the rest of their lives. Not only does this lower their risk of developing diseases such as hypertension and diabetes, but it also allows them to pass on these healthy habits to future generations to come.
Part 1.

Establishing Healthy Habits

“Old habits die hard.” This adage is certainly true when it comes to eating. Whichever habits children establish when they first begin to eat usually stick with them well into adulthood. You may find that your child puts up resistance to certain foods and routines at first, but remaining practical and consistent will allow you to help your child form a healthy relationship with food. Here are ten easy tips to help you and your child establish healthy habits:

Tip 1. Establish a meal schedule
Children respond well to routines and schedules. Meals should be served at around the same time each day. Your child will learn to expect food at certain times of the day which can prevent unregulated snacking.

Tip 2. Give your child options, but not too many
Children enjoy having the opportunity to make decisions on their own. Give them options at mealtime, but do not allow yourself to become a short-order cook. If your child is reluctant to try a certain food, do not force them to eat it, but offer it again another day. It often takes a few test runs to get children to try new foods.

Tip 3. Get your children involved
Depending on the age of your children, allow them to take part in creating the meal. The more involved they are in making a dish, the more likely they are to try it. Older children can contribute by chopping or even sautéing. For younger children, stirring or measuring may be more appropriate.

Tip 4. Have dinner together as a family
Dinner is not only a meal, but also a ritual. Time at the dinner table should be spent enjoying food and each other's company. Remove any distractions such as television, radio, cell phones, games, and toys. Dinnertime is an opportunity for family members to share their thoughts and engage in conversation with one another.

Tip 5. Do a pantry sweep
The easiest way to prevent your children from eating junk food is simply to keep it out of the house. Occasionally do a pantry sweep and throw out any unhealthy or expired foods that may have accumulated.
Tip 6. Prepare healthy snacks ahead of time

Inevitably, there are times when you will find yourself short on time or off schedule whether it be during the morning school drop-off rush or after school on the way to dance rehearsals and soccer practice. To avoid resorting to frozen pastries and fast food, prepare some healthy snacks the weekend before so you can easily grab them when you find yourself pinched for time. Healthier options include low-fat and low-sugar energy bars, yogurt tubes, and pre-sliced fruits or veggies.

Tip 7. Be a role model

Children most often learn their behaviors from those with whom they spend the most time. Studies have shown that a child’s food preferences are heavily influenced by their mother’s food preferences. Try to be a good role model for your children by making your own healthy eating choices.

Tip 8. Don’t criticize

Your child or you may slip up with your food choices every now and then. Refrain from casting shame on your child or yourself when this happens. Rather, reinforce healthy eating habits and move on. The more you make a food out to be “forbidden fruit,” the more likely your child will seek it when not monitored. In more severe cases, your child may even begin to develop an unhealthy relationship with food. To steer clear of this possibility, use positive language and avoid associating guilt with eating.

Tip 9. Replace juice and soda with water and low-fat milk

The number of calories that an average American ingests from beverages only is astounding. Not only do juice and soda contain excessive amounts of sugar, but they also prevent your child from obtaining the necessary amount of calcium they need each day by displacing milk as the beverage of choice. Instead of serving juice or soda with meals and snacks, give your child water or low-fat milk. The earlier this switch is made, the longer lasting the effects will be.

Tip 10. Take your child to the pediatrician regularly

This guidebook is meant to offer strategies and suggestions. Your child's doctor will be able to provide you with more detailed information regarding your child’s health. Continue to take your child to the pediatrician for well-child visits. Before making any changes to his or her diet or lifestyle, consult your pediatrician first.
MyPlate

In 2011, the United States Department of Agriculture introduced MyPlate, a nutrition guide for Americans that represents the 5 main food groups and their recommended portion sizes. MyPlate replaced the decades-old food pyramid design to allow for an easier understanding of what and how much Americans should eat at each meal.

Food Group Recommendations

MyPlate is divided into four sections: fruits, vegetables, grains, and protein. The smaller circle on the side represents a recommended serving of dairy. The size of each section of the plate represents the relative proportion of that particular food group that your child should be eating at each meal. The USDA recommends the following: 20% fruits, 30% vegetables, 30% grains, and 20% protein. Each meal should be accompanied by a serving of dairy.

ChooseMyPlate.gov

The USDA developed an interactive website to help your child keep track of his or her diet and exercise using the SuperTracker tool. The website also offers sample menus and recipes, examples of foods from each food group, and more information about healthy eating on a budget. Each of your family members can calculate his or her Body Mass Index (BMI) which indicates whether an individual is underweight, at a healthy weight, overweight, or obese.

Visit www.ChooseMyPlate.gov to begin tracking your diet and exercise using the SuperTracker tool.
In a world filled with text messaging, video games, and YouTube, where does physical activity fit in?

Over the past few decades, Americans have become too comfortable with leading sedentary lifestyles. Children are much more likely to spend their free time using their tech gadgets instead of going outside to play. The steady decrease in physical activity coupled with the rise of processed foods has led to childhood obesity, a health epidemic that has affected millions of children around the world.

Recognizing the need to combat this epidemic, health authorities created guidelines that suggest how much physical activity children need daily. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention recommend that children and adolescents partake in at least 60 minutes of physical activity each day. This includes aerobic, muscle-strengthening, and bone-strengthening activities.

Aerobic

Aerobic activities should make up the majority of your children's 60 minutes of exercise. Activities can vary from moderate- to vigorous-intensity. Some aerobic activities include biking, walking to school, playing sports like soccer or lacrosse, swimming, and dancing. Your children should participate in vigorous-intensity activities at least 3 days a week.

Muscle-Strengthening

Muscle-strengthening activities should be performed at least 3 days a week. These include push-ups, sit-ups, rowing, gymnastics, resistance exercises with exercise bands, weight machines, and hand-held weights.

Bone-Strengthening

Bone-strengthening activities should be performed at least 3 days a week. Activities include skipping, jumping rope, running, and sports such as volleyball, basketball, tennis, and gymnastics.

By encouraging physical activity and limiting screen time, your child is more likely to be in better shape and as an adult.
First Lady Michelle Obama introduced the Let’s Move! health initiative to America in 2010. This campaign aims to fight childhood obesity by promoting physical activity and healthy eating habits.

In an effort to revamp cafeteria lunches, Mrs. Obama launched the Chefs Move to Schools program as part of the Let’s Move! campaign. Through this program, professional chefs volunteer to cook healthy dishes with students.

Mrs. Obama also partnered with entertainer Beyoncé to release “Move Your Body,” a song with a choreographed dance routine, to encourage children to exercise.

Visit [www.letsmove.gov](http://www.letsmove.gov) to learn more about how to eat healthy and be more active.
Part 4. Diseases and Treatment

POOR EATING HABITS CAN LEAD TO...

**OBESITY**
- **Causes:** Eating more calories than your body needs, not enough physical activity
- **Symptoms:** Excessive weight gain, fatigue, trouble breathing or sleeping, joint and back pain
- **Treatment:** Healthy food choices, exercise
- **Annual Healthcare Cost in Vermont:** $141 million

**DIABETES (TYPE 2)**
- **Causes:** Excessive sugar in diet, not enough physical activity
- **Symptoms:** Increased thirst and urination, blurred vision, weight loss in spite of increased appetite, loss of sensation
- **Treatment:** Meal planning and weight control, exercise, medication or insulin use
- **Annual Healthcare Cost in Vermont:** $370 million

**MALNUTRITION**
- **Causes:** Unbalanced diet, starvation
- **Symptoms:** Fatigue, dizziness, rapid hair loss
- **Treatment:** Replacing missing nutrients
- **Annual Healthcare Cost in Vermont:** $200 million

**EATING DISORDERS (ANOREXIA/BULIMIA)**
- **Causes:** Eating problems during infancy and early childhood, negative self-image
- **Symptoms:** Refusing to eat, extreme exercising, going to the bathroom after eating, three or more missed periods
- **Treatment:** Reducing amount of exercise (anorexia), using schedules for eating, enrolling in a treatment program

**OTHER DISEASES:**
- Hypertension
- Cardiovascular Disease
- Atherosclerosis
- Arthritis
Part 5.
Grocery Shopping

Try to shop around the perimeter of the grocery store. The middle aisles are usually filled with less healthy processed foods.

Being a smart shopper means not only scoring deals, but also making the right choices. Be prepared when you go grocery shopping—come with a grocery list and try your best to stick to it. Below is a sample grocery list with healthy foods that can be used to create many nutritious meals.

### Grocery List

#### Fruits and Vegetables
- apples
- spinach
- grapes
- broccoli
- bananas
- bell peppers
- onions
- strawberries
- baby carrots
- potatoes

#### Milk, Cheese, Yogurt
- 1% or 2% low-fat milk
- low-fat yogurt
- low-fat string cheese

#### Bread and Grains
- whole wheat bread
- brown rice
- spinach tortillas

#### Meat, Poultry, Fish, Eggs, Beans, Nuts
- skinless, boneless chicken breast
- eggs
- unsalted almonds

#### Fats, Oils, Sugars
- olive oil
- honey (after age 12 mos.)

#### Packaged Foods
- low-fat granola bars
- canned black beans
- frozen vegetable medley
- low-sugar, high-fiber cereal
Part 6. Healthy Recipes

Berry Honey Parfait
Like having dessert for breakfast—almost.
Ingredients:
- 1/2 cup plain greek yogurt
- 1 tsp honey
- 1/2 cup berries of your choice (blueberries, blackberries, raspberries, and/or strawberries)
- 1/4 cup slivered almonds

Combine the yogurt and berries. Sprinkle slivered almonds and drizzle honey on top. Stir all together before enjoying.

Strawberry Feta Salad
This salad combines tangy and sweet flavors to create a healthy, delicious start to any meal.
Ingredients:
- 2 cups arugula or mixed greens
- 1/2 cup sliced strawberries
- 1/4 cup crumbled feta cheese
- 1/4 cup sliced red onion
- 1/4 cup toasted or raw walnuts
- balsamic vinegar
- olive oil

Combine the arugula, strawberries, feta cheese, onion, and walnuts in a bowl. Drizzle with balsamic vinegar and olive oil and toss.

Tip: Walnuts can be toasted in a toaster oven for 5-8 minutes. Serve warm in salad.

Vegetable Soup with Orzo Pasta
The perfect soup for a chilly day that will warm you up but not weigh you down.
Ingredients:
- 1/2 cup of diced celery
- 1/2 cup of diced onion
- 1/2 cup of diced carrots
- 2/3 cup dry orzo
- 3 cups low-sodium chicken broth
- 1/4 cup chopped parsley
- salt and pepper

In a medium saucepan, combine celery, onion, carrots, parsley, and chicken broth and to a boil. Add orzo, continue boiling for 10 minutes, then lower soup to a simmer. Add salt and pepper to taste.

Chicken Parmesan
This is a simple, healthy recipe that takes only minutes to make.
Ingredients:
- 2 tablespoons olive oil
- 4 chicken cutlets (3 oz. each)
- 1 cup marinara sauce
- 1/2 tsp dried parsley
- 1/2 cup grated parmesan

Heat the olive oil in a pan. Sauté the chicken cutlets, about 4 minutes each side. Remove the pan from the heat and sprinkle the dried parsley on top. Pour the marinara sauce on top of the cutlets and sprinkle the parmesan over the sauce. Wait until the cheese has melted before serving.
Resources

Since childhood obesity has become a part of the national discourse, health organizations and government agencies have made many resources available for parents, children, and community members in an effort to encourage healthy eating and physical activity.

General Nutrition and Health

🍎 ChooseMyPlate.gov
http://www.choosemyplate.gov/

🍎 Let’s Move!
http://www.letsmove.gov/

🍎 Centers for Disease Control and Prevention-Healthy Living
http://www.cdc.gov/features/healthyliving.html

🍎 Palo Alto Medical Foundation
http://www.pamf.org/parenting-teens/health/

🍎 KidsHealth
http://kidshealth.org/parent/
Preparing and Tracking Meals

Meals Matter
http://www.mealsmatter.org/

Produce for Better Health Foundation
http://www.pbhfoundation.org/pub_sec/edu

Resources Specific to the State of Vermont

Vermont Farmers’ Market Association
http://www.vtfma.org/

Vermont Department of Health Eat For Health
http://healthvermont.gov/eatforhealth/

Hunger Free Vermont
https://hungerfreevt.org/

3SquaresVT
http://vermontfoodhelp.com/

Vermont FEED
http://www.vtfeed.org/node/209
Media, Technology, and Eating

- National Institutes of Health–We Can!
  

- National Institutes of Health–National Institute of Child Health and Human Development
  
  http://www.nichd.nih.gov/msy/Pages/index.aspx

Supplemental Material for Children

- United States Department of Agriculture–Food and Nutrition Services
  
All images in this document were obtained from the Internet. They are intended to be used for educational purposes only.

http://www.sheknows.com/parenting/articles/812542/creating-a-family-meal-time

http://www.ahappyhealthystart.com/

http://www.almightydad.com/behavior/getting-kids-to-eat-healthy-foods


http://healthyventuracounty.org/healthy-kids/

http://www.vidaplusforkids.com/wp/?page_id=172’


http://www.childrenshospital.vanderbilt.org/blogs/CHAMPSGardens/?tag=obesity


http://www.letsmove.gov/blog/2011/10/12/jumping-jacks-around-world

http://www.seiyaku.com/customs/crosses/serpent.html

https://www.glastonburyus.org/parents/ptso/Pages/RedApple.aspx

https://www.ag.ndsu.edu/faithcommunitiesalive/newsletters/fca-articles/family-meals-offer-many-benefits

 Websites listed in ‘Resources’ section were provided by “Nutrition & Physical Activity Web Site Resources” (Harvard School of Public Health, YMCA). Additional websites regarding healthcare costs and programs specific to the State of Vermont are listed below:


http://knowledgecenter.csg.org/kc/content/diabetes-costly-epidemic


http://www.uvm.edu/~cdci/nutrition/files/2012Hungerinyoungchildren.pdf