

Name of Child: _____ Date: _____

Healthy Eating Habits

Making good choices about what to eat can impact the wellness of our bodies, our emotions, and our mental health. What we eat and drink can affect our bodies in good ways or in bad ways. This includes our mood, our energy levels, how we think, how we sleep, how we interact with others, and how we talk to others.

It is important to read food labels to be sure the foods you choose to eat each day provide the best nutrition for your physical, emotional, and mental health. Unfortunately, chemicals (**additives**) that are not healthy are often put into the foods we buy at the store to make them taste better, look better, or to make foods last longer.



What we eat and drink can affect our bodies in good ways or in bad ways.

Some of these unhealthy additives include:

- too much sugar or sugar substitutes (such as aspartame, Splenda®, saccharin, and Stevia®)
- too much salt
- unhealthy fats
- unhealthy preservatives

Some important goals of developing healthy eating habits include:

- learning to make healthy food choices
- limiting unhealthy additives in the foods you eat
- learning to enjoy the time you spend eating

Our healthcare team is here to help you learn more about the food choices you make every day. Our goal is to help you to create healthy eating habits that will last a lifetime.

Making healthy food choices:

Eating foods from several food groups each day can provide your body with the vitamins and minerals you need to support the highest level of physical, emotional, and mental health. Try using this list as a guide for making healthy food choices a daily habit:



Fresh fruits and vegetables including dark leafy greens (such as kale, swiss chard, or collard greens), sweet potatoes, apples, oranges, strawberries, broccoli, tomatoes, avocados, blueberries, and raspberries. If fresh fruits and vegetables are not available, frozen options are usually better than canned options. Fruits and vegetables are good sources of vitamins, minerals, and fiber. They also help defend against damage to your cells (**antioxidants**) caused by harmful particles that build up over time in your body.



Whole grains including oatmeal, bread, and pasta. Whole grains are better options than foods made from white flour or white rice. Whole grain food choices are made from oats, barley, rye, amaranth, quinoa, brown rice, wheat flour, and buckwheat. If possible, do not eat foods made with white flour and white rice. Packaged food in this category are often processed. Try to choose options that are not processed such as quinoa, brown rice, or oatmeal. Whole grains are good sources of vitamins, minerals, fiber, protein, and antioxidants.



Beans and legumes including black beans, kidney beans, white beans, garbanzo beans, soybeans, black-eyed peas, split peas, and lentils. Beans and legumes are loaded with fiber. They are also a good source of protein and can help to keep your heart healthy.



Meats including lean chicken and turkey (white meats). These are better options than lean beef and pork (red meats). Lean meats are low in fat and high in protein. Avoid processed meats including hot dogs, lunch meats, bacon, and sausage. Protein is important for building strong muscles and for repairing cells and tissues in the body.



Fish including tuna, salmon, and cod. These options are good sources of omega-3 fatty acids. Omega-3 fatty acids are good for your body and your brain.



Healthy fats including olive oil, coconut oil, or avocado oil. Look for options that are called **monounsaturated** or **polyunsaturated** on the labels. Avoid margarine, butter replacement spreads, and seed oils (sunflower oil, soy oil, and canola oil). Limit fried foods and processed foods to help decrease the amount of unhealthy fats you eat. Fried foods contain trans fats which can increase your risk for heart disease. Healthy oils contain vitamins and antioxidants



Nuts and seeds including almonds, pistachios, walnuts, cashews, pecans, macadamia nuts, pumpkin seeds, flaxseeds, pomegranate seeds, and sunflower seeds. Nuts and seeds are a good source of several nutrients and they can help lower total and bad cholesterol levels while boosting good cholesterol levels in the body.



Dairy products including milk, yogurt, and cheese. Dairy products sometimes contain hormones and antibiotics in them. If possible, purchase organic pasture raised dairy products and limit the amounts you eat and drink. Choose products that are plain (unsweetened) to limit sugar intake. Dairy products contain nutrients that help to keep your bones strong.

Important: If you have food allergies, do not eat food you are allergic to.



Tips for choosing healthy foods to eat:

- When you sit down to eat your meal or snack, use a smaller plate and put vegetables on half of the plate.
- Avoid food and drinks that have sugar in them. These foods include candy, cakes, pie, and cookies. Drinks that often have sugar in them include soda, juice, fruit-flavored drinks, flavored water, sport and energy drinks, and sweetened coffee and tea.
- Include 1 – 2 servings of fruit as a food choice each day. Fruits have some natural sugars in them, so it is important to balance the amount of fruit you eat each day with other healthy food choices such as plain yogurt, a small handful of nuts, or unsweetened peanut butter (as long as you do not have a nut allergy).
- Drink plenty of water each day to stay hydrated. Talk to your doctor to find out how much water you should drink each day based on your age, weight, and activity level.
- Limit the amount of salt you add to your food. Flavor your food with herbs and spices instead of using salt.
- Eat slowly. This allows time for your stomach to send a signal to your brain that your body is satisfied with the food you have eaten. Eating slowly helps to prevent overeating.

Tips for parents and caregivers:

Parents and caregivers play an important role in helping kids learn healthy eating habits. Here is a list of tips to help you to create a positive environment as your child learns to make healthy eating habits last a lifetime.

- Include your child in the process of buying and preparing the foods you eat.
- Be a role model for your child. Working on your own eating habits can have a positive impact on the choices your child makes about food.
- Offer only healthy food options and allow your child to decide which foods they want to eat.
- Prepare meals and eat together as a family as often as possible. Turn off technology and limit distractions during this time together.
- Avoid punishments, discipline, and rewards related to food.
- Never force your child to eat a certain food or tell them to eat everything on their plate. Instead, encourage your child to listen to their body to find out when they have had enough to eat or when they are hungry for more food.

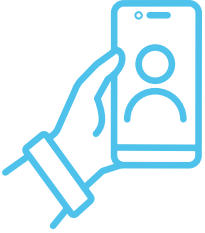


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Now that you have read this:

Tell your nurse or doctor what you plan to do to create healthy eating habits. (Check when done.)



If you have any questions or concerns,

call your child's doctor or call _____

If you want to know more about child health and illness, visit our library at The Emily Center at Phoenix Children's Thomas Campus

1919 E. Thomas Rd., Phoenix, AZ 85016 | 602-933-1400 | 866-933-6459

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Disclaimer

The information provided is intended to be general information for educational purposes only. It is not intended to take the place of an examination, treatment, or consultation with a health care provider. If you have any questions about your child's care, contact your child's health care provider.