



TAKECHARGE

WELCOA'S SELF-CARE BULLETIN

HEALTHY EATING FOR THE WHOLE FAM:

How to Set a Good Food Example for Your Family

The foods and drinks we put into our bodies are our fuel. They provide us with energy and nutrients—like vitamins, minerals, and proteins—that our bodies need to function and thrive. Research shows that healthy food and drink choices are especially important for children's growing bodies and minds. Indeed, healthy choices have both immediate and long-lasting benefits for you and your family.

Parents can begin teaching their children about healthy eating from the day they are born. Setting a good example is very important. Here are some simple tips and tricks to help you become a good nutritional role model.

Keep healthy foods front and center. If you place a bowl of fruit on your kitchen table, your children are more likely to grab it for a snack. Remember, we tend to eat what's in front of us, whether it's a bag of chips or fresh veggies. So, make an effort to place healthy, nutritious foods where they can be easily seen and eaten.

Involve your family in the meal planning and cooking. Get your family's input on what types of meals and snacks sound good to them. Then, get them to help slice, dice, and chop. Kids especially will be more likely to eat healthy meals when they've been involved and have contributed to the process. Moreover, teaching kids to cook simple, tasty, and healthy meals when they're young is a skill that will stay with them throughout their lives.



Talk with your doctor if you have any concerns about your health.

Teach your family how to read food labels. When you're grocery shopping, the Nutrition Facts label is a great resource to help you compare foods and drinks. It can help you confirm whether products marked with healthy-sounding terms really are healthy. For example, "low-fat" foods aren't necessarily healthy; they can be very high in sugar and calories.

Use the Nutrition Facts label to help guide you to limit the nutrients you want to cut back on, such as sodium or added sugar. You can also use it to make sure you're getting plenty of the nutrients you need, such as calcium and iron. When reading the label, start at the top. Look at the serving size. Next, look at the calorie count. Then move on to the nutrients, where it lists the amount and daily values experts recommend.

Be realistic and understanding. Yes, there are certain foods you want to consume less often—soda, candy, cookies, chips are just a few examples.

But it's unrealistic to think you can completely eliminate these foods from your family's diet. It's ok to have the occasional treat, especially if you regularly consume fruits and veggies and other whole foods. Don't make your children feel guilty or ashamed for eating a cookie!

Take time to build healthy eating decisions into every aspect of your family's life. If you're a parent or guardian, start talking with kids at an early age about health and nutrition. And practice what you preach. Make healthy food and drink choices yourself so you can set a good example for your kids!

