Help your three to five (3-5) year old be healthy

Between the ages of 3-5 years, children go from soft pieces of food to foods with more texture. They cannot cut their food yet, but they can use fingers to push food onto a spoon, pick up food with a fork, and drink from a cup.

Encourage new foods.

Children are curious about food but are still reluctant to try new things. Parents can allow children to help choose and prepare new foods with different flavors and textures. When offering something new, try small portions and do not pressure children to eat what they do not want. It helps to praise your children when they try new foods.

Encourage healthy eating habits.

There's no great secret to healthy eating. To help your children and family develop healthy eating habits:

- Provide plenty of vegetables, fruits, and whole-grain products.
- Include low-fat milk and dairy products.
- Choose lean meats, poultry, fish, lentils, and beans for protein.
- Encourage your family to drink lots of water.
- Limit sugar-sweetened beverages.
- Limit consumption of sugar and saturated fat.

Look for ways to make favorite dishes healthier.

The recipes that your family enjoys can be made healthier and just as satisfying. For new ideas about how to add more fruits and vegetables to your daily diet, check out the recipe database from FruitsandVeggiesMatter.gov.

Remove calorie-rich temptations!

Although everything can be enjoyed in moderation, reducing the calorie-rich temptations of high-fat and high-sugar, or salty snacks can also help your children develop healthy eating habits. Instead, only allow your children to eat them sometimes, so that they truly will be treats! Here are examples of easy-to-prepare, low-fat and low-sugar treats that are 100 calories or less:

- A medium-size apple, peeled and cut into thin slices.
- A medium-size banana cut into rounds.
- Vanilla yogurt with blueberries and raspberries.
- Steamed carrots, broccoli, and bell peppers with 2 tbsp. hummus.

Increase activity and play.

Play helps children develop motor skills and encourages good physical activity habits that last a lifetime. Children are not yet ready for organized sports but they do need at least 60 minutes per day of moving around, running, jumping and playing.

Regular physical activity is important because it:

- Helps strengthen bones.
- Decreases blood pressure.
- Reduces stress and anxiety.
- Increases self-esteem.
- Helps children maintain a healthy weight.

Now is the time to help your child enjoy good nutrition and physical activity!!!