

**- Child development**

# A Healthy Home Environment for Children's Development

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Creating a healthy environment at home is vital to the overall development of children, who learn from the influences around them. Part of parenting is creating the habits that will stick with children throughout their life times and shape them as mature and responsible individuals. Instilling a healthy lifestyle in children when they are young can help build the framework for an entire lifetime of healthy habits.



One way to establish a healthy home environment is to practice healthy eating habits. Research has shown that making dinner a family affair leads to an encouraging environment for healthy eating. Families who share at least three meals a week have children who are percent more likely to eat healthier foods than those in families who ate few or no meals together. This also coincides with a less likely chance of becoming overweight or practicing dangerous weight-loss efforts such as purging and taking laxatives or diet pills.

Homemade meals typically are lower calorie than their restaurant counter parts and also allow children to participate in the meal-making process. This allows for more family time and a deeper understanding of the creation for each meal. A kitchen stocked with healthy foods is important because children will eat what is available. The goal is to have at least five servings of fruits and vegetables a day, so parents shall encourage healthy snacking. The pantry should include whole wheat bread and cereals and limit low-nutrient snacks as an occasional treat. In addition, it's good to serve water or milk and reduce sugar in take by eliminating soda and fruit-flavored drinks.

Parents play an important role in a family's health because they serve as the models for children to follow. It is important for parents to eat healthy to send the right message. As children follow their parents' lead, they too will slowly develop healthy eating habits. Acting as a good role model also includes parents explaining feelings of fullness to discourage overeating.

Serving appropriate portion sizes can easily maintain this, too. Also, children shall be involved in the entire meal process—parents shall take them grocery shopping, decide together upon healthy dinner options and teach them to read food labels.

Encouraging children to enjoy outdoor activities by playing games in the yard or going on hikes is another way to develop a healthy home environment. Parents playing ball with their kids or involving them in sports not only helps in still a healthy lifestyle, but also helps the young ones develop coordination and important social skills not attained by sitting in front of the television. Teaching children the joys of sports early in life can help them find their talents and teach them to appreciate exercise as a form of fun.

Talking positively, encouraging children and rewarding them with positive feedback help reinforce good behavior and healthy habits in and outside the home. When children choose to be active, learn about a topic, select a healthy snack or get involved with others, parents shall positively reinforce these actions by supporting the kids and ensuring that their good choices are noticed and applauded. This helps build the kids' self-confidence.

Providing children with consistent responsibilities is an important building block for future success. Even small tasks such as planning and creating their snacks or lunches, sending holiday cards to friends and family, or cleaning the house, each offers the opportunity to take ownership, teaches how to complete required tasks and also allows parents the opportunity to correct their kids' choices along the way.

Exposing children to a positive environment with positive role models, healthy food options, outside activities and intriguing mental challenges will increase their ability to become more positive individuals. Such an upbringing will help children make choices that perpetuate a healthy outlook and a healthy lifestyle for years to come.