

5 ways to be **Healthy**— with your kids

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WHENEVER we admonish our kids to “Eat your vegetables!,” “Get up from bed already!” and “Put that gadget down now!” for the nth time, how many of us catch ourselves thinking that we should be doing the same?



“Children are likely to develop and maintain healthy habits in an environment where these healthy habits are seen and practiced regularly,” says Rosario P. Paguntalan, MD, chairman of the Department of Pediatrics of the top hospital in the Philippines, Makati Medical Center (Makatimed, www.makatimed.net.ph). “For kids to adopt these habits as their own, their parents need to serve as role models of healthy behavior.” What better time to commit to positive (and hopefully lasting) change than at the start of a brand-new year? You and your family can begin your journey to healthy living together and on a clean slate. Remember, kids stick to good habits if they see you doing them, so take the lead in ingraining these five healthy practices.

- **Eat better.** Everyone, no matter what age, will certainly benefit from this health resolution—and it doesn’t have to be done cold turkey. “Make changes gradually during mealtime,” shares Paguntalan. “Replace pork and beef with chicken, fish and seafood, and look for recipes that incorporate vegetables into dishes. Plant-based meat substitutes are also available in the market today, and can be used as alternative protein sources.”

Even little tweaks make a huge difference. Limit trips to or ordering from fastfood joints as these food items contain trans fats that elevate bad cholesterol levels and increase the risk of heart disease. You and your kids can also swap calorie-rich colas, boxed juices and milk teas for freshly squeezed juices or water, and replace salty chips with crunchy nuts and slices of fresh vegetables.

- **Be active.** If you’re looking for a reason to start exercising, why not make your family your motivation? “By getting fit, you can live long enough to see your kids’ kids,” Paguntalan stresses. “Even 30 minutes of moderate physical activity a day for five days a week has a positive impact on your physical, mental and emotional well-being.” While you’re at it, enlist the kids to keep you company. Not only will they get their daily dose of exercise (and decrease chances of childhood obesity), they’ll ensure you’ll stick to yours, too. “When you workout alone, you’re tempted to slack off or, worse, quit,” Paguntalan underlines. “Working out with a buddy, or in this case, your kids, means you’ll stay consistent.”

- **Limit technology.** These days, almost everything we do involves some type of gadget and the internet: from schoolwork to office work to entertainment to simply keeping in touch, even the simplest everyday activities are fueled by technology. But it doesn’t have to take over your life. “Establish a no-gadgets schedule in the family. During mealtimes, keep phones and tablets

away from the dinner table,” suggests Paguntalan. “Or spend a few gadget-free hours together listening to each other talk about how your day went. The hours away from tech can help you and your kids encourage bonding. A solid and comfortable parent-child bond contributes to good mental health for all parties concerned.”

■ **Get a checkup.** Sure, you’re on top of your kids’ pediatrician and dental appointments—but when was the last time you had an annual physical exam? “Again, make your children your reason for staying healthy,” says Paguntalan. “When you see your family physician regularly for a checkup—and not only when you’re feeling ‘off’ or experiencing symptoms—it’s your way of assuring your kids that you’ll be around for a long time.”

■ **Have a healthy attitude.** How you deal with stress, disappointment, success, or affection from your spouse and children, and other circumstances in life sets an example for your children to follow. “If they see you behaving consistently toward, say, a bad situation by lashing out in anger or shirking from responsibility, that’s what they’ll do, too,” Paguntalan explains. “Conversely, if they see you face challenges head-on with a positive, can-do mindset, they’ll do the same. Overall good health and well-being can only happen at home when you initiate it, and your kids can see the benefits of living this way.”