

- Lifestyles / Heart

LIFESTYLE HABITS TO KEEP YOUR KID'S HEART HEALTHY

Philippine Daily Inquirer · 28 Mar 2023 · C2 · Contact MakatiMed On-Call at 88888999; email mmc@makatimed.net.ph; visit makatimed.net.ph.

In a country where cardiovascular diseases account for a third of deaths (or 72 percent of deaths in 2021, according to the Philippine Statistics Office), efforts to keep our heart healthy should start years before we become adults—as early as childhood.

“Though heart disease is hereditary—you are more likely to have it if your close blood relatives do—it can also develop as a consequence of one’s environment,” says Dr. Ceres Paulino Canto of the cardiology department of Makati Medical Center (MakatiMed).

“Kids who are exposed to family members who smoke and drink, eat mostly processed food and have sedentary lifestyles are likely to follow in their footsteps. So, while cardiovascular diseases like heart attack and stroke are associated with the older generation, their causes can be traced to childhood.”

Canto shares three lifestyle habits to keep your little ones’ hearts healthy:

Eat nutritious food. Introduce quality nutrition the minute your kids are born. Start with breast-milk, which is rich in protein, fat, carbohydrates, vitamins and minerals. When they’re ready for solids, make them get used to and appreciate fresh fruits, vegetables, whole grains, lean protein and low-fat dairy products.

“And because you’re no spoilsport, treat them to fastfood fare and sugary drinks occasionally but do practice portion control,” Canto suggests.

Get active. In this age of the internet, kids typically spend their days staring at a computer screen, tablet or phone. “Physical activity doesn’t have to be expensive or complicated,” Canto points out. “Letting loose at the playground, dancing or engaging in sports for 30 minutes to an hour a day deliver oxygen and nutrients that allow the cardiovascular system to work more efficiently. Help them develop a lifelong love of physical fitness and activity today.”

Kick bad habits. Do you smoke or drink? Stay up late? Consider junk food a food group? There’s a strong possibility your kids will, too. Kids love mirroring what their parents do, so it’s best to lead a healthy lifestyle yourself.

“If you’re going to be a role model for your children, inspire them by espousing healthy habits like quitting smoking and minding your sleep hygiene,” Canto reminds.

“Kids are more likely to stick to a heart-healthy lifestyle if they grow up exposed to it, especially during their most formative years. Once these habits are instilled in them, they would be harder to break, even when they reach adulthood.”