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Welcome to the Parenting Hub!

April 2023

Promoting Physical Health and Wellbeing



*Parent ConnexT™ is under the Beech Acres Parenting Center umbrella of programs.
Serving children and all the adults in their lives for over 170 years.*

Before you flip to the next slide take a moment to...

- Assess how you feel your family is doing around health and wellbeing. Are you active enough? Do you focus on healthy and mindful eating? What would you like your health and wellbeing to look like?
- What does health and wellbeing mean to you? What do you think it means for your children?
- Be mindful of your relationship with screens. Can you use screens with more intentionality? Use your strength of curiosity to investigate your own screen habits. Children learn from what we do more than what we say.

Infants:

- *Begin as you wish to go on.* This stage offers a great opportunity to assess your own habits and intentions for how you would like to proceed as a family. What are your goals around physical activity? Mealtimes?
- Consult your healthcare provider regarding when to introduce foods to your infant. When you have the green light, focus on introducing your baby to different flavors, nutrients, and types of foods that are safe for them to eat.
- Follow your baby's cues as to when they are done eating or are hungry for more.
- Use positive language about food and smile and engage with your baby as you feed them.
- Allow your baby to manipulate a spoon, handle and explore foods with their hands as well as their mouths. Expect mealtimes to be messy!
- Avoid having screens on during mealtime, it can often interfere with hunger cues. If your child is distracted, they won't notice when they are full. This is a great habit to start implementing when you introduce foods that you can continue throughout your child's life.



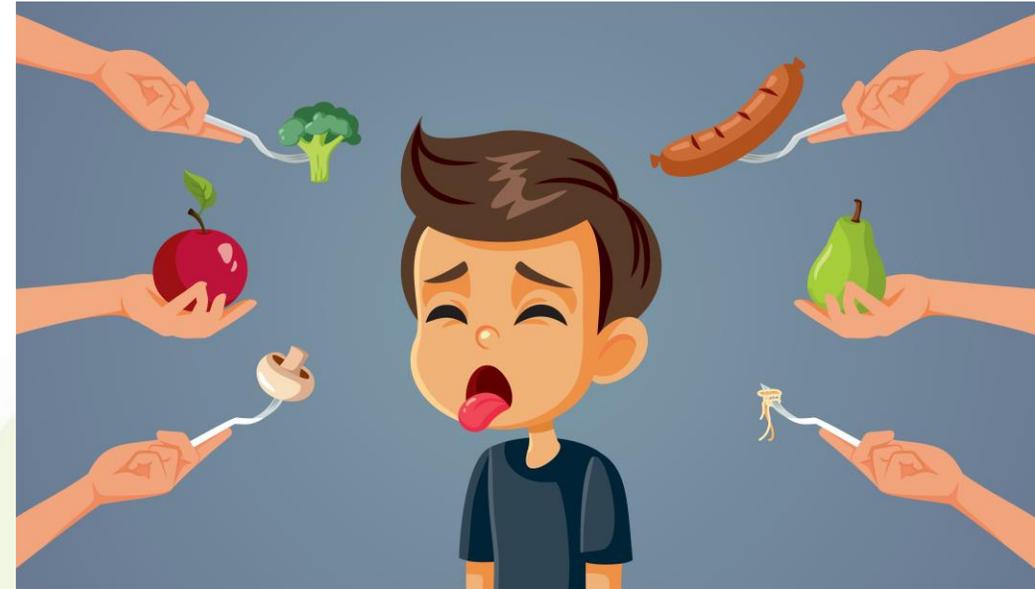
Infants cont.:



- Babies will naturally move around if given the space and opportunity to do so. Offer tummy time and time on the floor when safe.
- As your baby becomes mobile, either crawling or walking, provide lots of opportunity for exploration in safe ways. Baby proof your home so they can safely explore and move around.
- Get outside! Take your baby out for a nature walk or a stroll around the block. Fresh air and nature are naturally soothing and interesting to your baby. For the mobile baby, provide ways they can move, bring a blanket to the park and be ok with grass stains or getting a little dirty.

Toddlers and Preschoolers:

- Do not be surprised if your child starts to become picky about what they eat. It is typical for food preferences to change, and toddlers are also learning and finding ways to seek control over their environment.
- Define your boundaries around food, for example, dinner time is the meal provided to the family vs making each person an individual meal. Or you might decide it is ok for my child to have something else for dinner if they don't like what we are having. Focus on your most important value as you likely can't have both: is making sure your child eats more important or is it more important that everyone eats the same meal? There is no right or wrong answer but recognize what is most important to you in the long run.
- If you choose to have a family meal and your child has decided not to eat what you are eating, offer some healthy side options that you know your child will eat. Include your toddler in meal planning and preparation. The more they are involved, the more likely you will get them to try new foods.



Toddlers and Preschoolers cont.:

**HELLO, MY NAME IS HARLOW
AND I REFUSE TO EAT
THE BOTTOM HALF
OF A BANANA.**



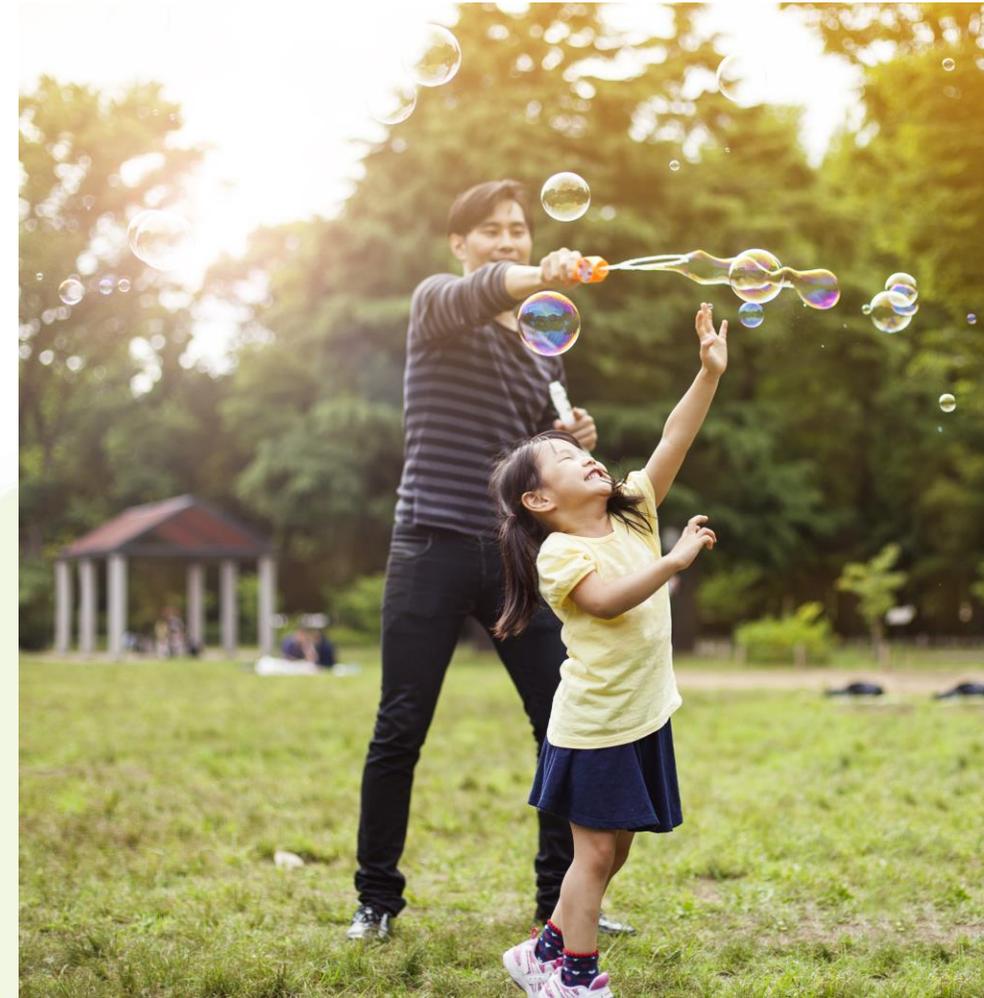
- Avoid bribing or forcing your child to eat. It is more important they learn about hunger cues and honor when they are full than finishing a meal or food. A child this age often gets all their nutrient needs met over the span of a week vs daily.
- **Do not give up!** Keep introducing new or healthy foods you would like your child to try. Toddlers are grazers and do not eat big meals (hence why they snack a lot too).
- Your child is in charge of whether or not to eat and how much. You are in charge of what foods you offer, when you offer them, and where they eat.
- Be mindful of the foods you are buying and offering. Good nutrition encourages healthy brain development.
- Avoid processed foods and added sugar.
- Bridge foods you know your child likes to a healthier version. For example, if you know your child will eat chicken nuggets from a fast food restaurant, start making your own healthier version at home with your child's involvement.

Toddlers and Preschoolers cont.:

Toddlers and young children are naturally active.

Encourage movement by:

- Limiting screen time, especially during meals.
- Spending time outdoors: the playground, a local park, and your own backyard all entice little ones to get moving.
- Offering toys that encourage movement: balls, large blocks, trikes, playground equipment.
- Playing in ways that encourage movement: blow bubbles for your child to chase, dance to music, push doll strollers or play trucks around the house or outside
- Creating spaces in your home that are safe for your child to move around.
- On days that you are stuck inside, create an indoor obstacle course or do a yoga or exercise video with your child.
- Go for a family nature walk.
- ***Starting these habits young can help create a lifetime of healthy eating and being active!***



School Age Children:



- Be intentional in your conversations with your child around health, diet and exercise. Your child is becoming more aware of their environment, which includes different body types. Your child picks up on your body image, so be aware of how you talk about your own body and other's bodies. Be mindful of how you approach discussing a healthy lifestyle and your own habits around diet and exercise. Children often notice our behavior more than our words.
- Continue to be mindful of the foods you are buying and offering to your child. You don't need to be restrictive, as it's good for children to learn that all foods are okay to eat, just in moderation.
- Continue to allow your child to listen to their body regarding their hunger cues. No "clean plate" rules. If you find that your child is never hungry for dinner, but wants a snack 30 min. later, save the dinner for later or offer only healthy options.
- Continue to limit access to screens during meals and snacks.
- Avoid using treats as a reward or to soothe negative emotions. This can cause unhealthy associations around food.
- Family meals encourage healthier eating and are an opportunity for connection. If dinnertime doesn't work for your family, try breakfast.

School Age Children cont.:

- **Help school age children be active by giving them lots of options to try to find what they like best, and the opportunity to interact with their friends and peers.**
- Limit screen time (this bears repeating).
- Do physical activity together: go on a family walk after dinner, take a hike, visit a local park, toss a ball in the backyard, go for a bike ride.
- This is an ideal age to participate in organized sports and activities: soccer, basketball, baseball or softball, gymnastics, dance, swimming, martial arts....the options are limitless!
- Provide sports equipment and active games at home to encourage your child to be active (balls, frisbees, swing sets, cornhole/beanbag toss, hula hoops, bubbles, sidewalk chalk, Twister).
- Check out your local recreation center or YMCA/YWCA for family activities.



Adolescents and Teens:



- The teenage brain is a work in progress, so nutritious food choices should be encouraged for healthy brain development. Adolescents and teens tend to gravitate to junk food and sugary treats. Eating too much junk food can have a negative impact on feelings, behavior, and overall health.
- Teens often experience a sleep deficit as their internal clocks are naturally inclined to late night hours, so they will often skip breakfast. Offer options for a healthy breakfast. Try to avoid highly processed foods and foods with refined sugar as this can lead to a sugar crash later.
- Link your teen's values to the benefits of good nutrition. For example, if your child places a high value on academics and grades, impress upon them that an unhealthy diet can impact learning, memory, and focus. If your teen is athletically inclined, focus on how eating well is important for sports performance, building strong muscles and bones, and recovering after a hard workout or game. Good nutrition also improves skin condition, nail and hair health.
- This is a great time to start teaching your child how to cook healthy meals as they get closer to graduation. Do your best to continue family meals. This can become more challenging as teens' lives can be busy, but the effort is worth it for the pay off.

Adolescents and Teens cont.:



- Be aware of what content your teen is following on social media. Are the influencers promoting body positivity or the opposite? Often influencers will use filters and photo shop and do not portray a realistic body image which can lead teens to have unrealistic expectations of themselves.
- Teach them to be a mindful participant in media by recognizing the motivation behind advertisements and what they are trying to sell. The diet industry targets this age to create a customer for life and the messages are usually unhealthy or toxic.
- Some teens love and participate in team sports, which are a great way to stay physically active. But team sports aren't for everyone. Look into "rec" level or less competitive sports teams for your child if they aren't interested in joining the school team.
- If your teen is less than enthusiastic about joining a sports team, consider other options. Do they enjoy cycling? Hiking? Swimming? Dancing? Look for interests that involve movement and provide opportunities to try new activities as well.
- Plan family activities that center around being active. Go bowling, for a hike, or a bike ride. Do yardwork or clean the car together. Your teen may begrudgingly participate, but that is okay. You are still modeling healthy behaviors with them, and they will carry those lessons with them into adulthood.
- Check out the gym—some kids prefer individual fitness over team sports.
- Limit screentime. Devices encourage a sedentary lifestyle.

How much exercise does my family need?

CDC Guidelines:

Recommended Levels for Preschool-Aged Children (ages 3 through 5 years)

- Preschool-aged children (ages 3 through 5 years) should be physically active throughout the day for growth and development.
- Adult caregivers should encourage preschool-aged children to be active when they play.

Recommended Levels for School-Aged Children and Adolescents (ages 6 through 17 years)

- Children and adolescents ages 6 through 17 years should do 60 minutes (1 hour) or more of moderate-to-vigorous intensity physical activity each day, including daily aerobic – and activities that strengthen bones (like running or jumping) – 3 days each week, and that build muscles (like climbing or doing push-ups) – 3 days each week.

Recommended Levels for Adults (18-64 years old)

- At least 150 min. per week of moderate intensity activity such as brisk walking.
- At least 2 days per week of activities that strengthen muscles.

<https://www.cdc.gov/physicalactivity/basics/age-chart.html>

Guidelines for Getting Active:

- **Rule # 1: Keep it fun!** Help your child find an activity they enjoy. Let them try out lots of different activities to see what they like best.
- **Choose an activity that is age appropriate for your child.** An 8-year-old isn't ready for long runs or weightlifting, but they can swim, play soccer, or go for a hike with the family.
- **Explain to your child that being active is part of taking care of their body.** Movement is just as important to their wellbeing as getting enough sleep, eating healthy food, and brushing their teeth.
- **Incorporate activity into your normal day:** Take the stairs instead of the elevator, park farther away from the building, walk or bike to a nearby store on an errand.
- **Set Limits on Screen Time:** TV, computers, video games, and smart phones encourage sedentary behavior.
- **Be active together:** Go for walk or a bike ride as a family. Try a new activity together, such as tennis or golf. Play a game of tag or kick ball. Go for a swim.
- **Don't Overdo It!** Moderation matters. Slowly increase exercise over time.

Spotlight on Strengths-how to use your strengths to get healthy and active!



PERSEVERANCE—teach your child to follow through and complete an activity



Create an activity plan as a family and use **TEAMWORK** to pull it off



BE **CREATIVE**. Make up a new game, create our own family recipes together.



It takes **BRAVERY** to try a new activity or new food.



When making lifestyle changes, channel your strength of **HOPE** to envision a positive future.



Use **FRIENDSHIP** to make a plan to meet friends or family to do an activity together or share a healthy meal together.



Use **CURIOSITY** to find out what each family member's favorite activities and healthy foods are.

How are we doing?



Your voice matters. Please scan the QR code for a quick survey.

<https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/MWCQN6F>

Help us do better! 

Our vision is a world where every child's natural strengths are nurtured so they realize their endless potential – use your **strength of honesty** to help us get there.

Answer 4 quick questions by scanning the QR code and enter to win a family game night package!



Complimentary Week-Long Classes on a Variety of Parenting Topics Delivered Via Text.

Learn more [here](#).



Healthy Friendships For School-Aged Children K-12

Welcome to Healthy Friendships for School-Aged Children K-12, brought to you by the team at Beech Acres Parenting Center! In this course, you'll learn how you can...

UNCOVERING THE STRENGTHS OF ALL CHILDREN WITH A MINDFUL FRAMEWORK FOR INTENTIONAL GROWTH.

Natural Strength Parenting 101

Welcome to Natural Strength Parenting 101! This seven day course explores ways to positively utilize you and your child's natural emotional strengths in your unique...



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Welcome to Single and Solo Parenting! This five day course explores some basic aspects of Single Solo Parenting, such as the difference between the two and building...



Intentionality With Family Values

Welcome to Intentionality with Family Values! This five day course explores what your family's shared values consist of and how you can implement them into your daily...



Mindfulness With Intentionality

Welcome to Mindfulness with Intentionality! This five day course explores some basic concepts of mindfulness and how you can utilize them to set intentions for...



Transgender Youth - Support And Care

Welcome to Understanding and Supporting Transgender Youth, brought to you by the team at Beech Acres Parenting Center! In this course, you'll be given a brief...





In just **3 sessions**, their approach has been proven to strengthen the parent/child relationship – with the effect lasting at least **3 months later**.

Connect with us!

If you are interested in something more personal, feel free to contact Katie Helmes at khelmes@beechacres.org to set-up a **virtual** session with a Child Development expert.