



Healthy Lifestyles

Dr. William Sears, the noted pediatrician and author of over 30 books on childcare, says that we parents have a problem. In Dr. Sears' L.E.A.N. Kids – standing for **L**ifestyle, **E**xercise, **A**ttitude, and **N**utrition – he reports that “between 15 and 25 percent of American children are overfat – triple the rate of thirty years ago.” He is concerned that American children are growing up “overfat, underfit, and unhappy.”

Dr. Barry Sears, author of The Zone Diet, states that the strongest drug we take is the food we eat. Food is our fuel, influencing our energy, our mood, and our learning. Misbehavior and learning difficulties can be nutritionally linked. How we sensitize our children to food and exercise in their early years influences how they eat and play the rest of their lives. Overweight, under-active children tend to become overweight, under-active adults. How can we help our children become healthy eaters and lean kids so that they are primed for health rather than illness?

Eat more meals at home.

We have become a nation that eats out. Make mealtime an at-home event. Involve your children in food shopping and preparation. Meals can be a great time for connecting as well as teaching healthy eating.

Read labels.

When purchasing products, read the list of ingredients. Avoid products containing **high fructose corn syrup, sugar and hydrogenated oils, including partially-hydrogenated oils**. Hydrogenated oils increase the shelf life of products; however, our bodies don't recognize them as a food fat. They can have long-term ill effects. You will find these “fake factory oils” in crackers, breads, prepared frosting, cookies, and other bakery goods. Dr. Sears also identifies the “overdrinking of corn syrup-sweetened beverages” as “the single factor contributing most to the epidemic of childhood obesity.”

Eat more whole foods and fewer processed or refined foods. Eat low on the food chain. Include lots of raw, ripe fruits and vegetables. Include berries and nuts. Include the healthy fats, the omega-3's, from salmon, tuna, flaxseed and canola oils.

Drink more water.

Consider it your beverage of choice! Avoid soft drinks and sweetened juices.

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Have healthy snacks around the house so that children can graze between meals.

Dr. Sears advises that snacks be “nutrient dense” rather than “calorie dense.” Include fresh fruits, hummus, yogurt, peanut butter, hard boiled eggs, cherry tomatoes, nuts, carrots and celery slices. Keep in mind that your children will eat what you bring into your home.

Educate.

Dr. Sears’ “Traffic-Light Eating” is a helpful tool. Green-Light Foods – fruits, veggies, nuts, seeds, milk, soy, salmon, whole grains, and others— give us good energy and we have a green light to **GO** eat them. Yellow-Light Foods – butter, 100% fruit juice, honey, pasta, homemade cookies and others – are for us to eat with some **CAUTION**. With Red-Light Foods – prepackaged bakery goods, marshmallows, dyes, artificial sweeteners, presweetened beverages, foods with hydrogenated oils and others – we are to **STOP** and make a different, healthier choice.

Model physical activity and healthy eating.

Our children do what they see rather than what we say. Exercise with your children. Plan weekend activities that are indeed active. Instead of television, play a game outside. Take walks after dinner. Plant a garden together. Ride bikes. Take tennis lessons together. Swim. Run. Live healthy!

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