December 2016
Helping Kids Cope With Stress

LOOK! inside for…

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For more information on how to lead a healthier lifestyle, visit our website GetHealthyCT.org
The holidays are a time to celebrate, give thanks, and reflect. They are also a time to pay special attention to your health. Give the gift of health and safety to yourself and others by following these holiday tips.

1. **Wash your hands often.**
   Keeping hands clean is one of the most important steps you can take to avoid getting sick and spreading germs to others. Wash your hands with soap and clean running water for at least 20 seconds. If soap and clean water are not available, use an alcohol-based product.

2. **Stay warm.**
   Cold temperatures can cause serious health problems, especially in infants and older adults. Stay dry, and dress warmly in several layers of loose-fitting, tightly woven clothing. Check on children, the elderly and pets.

3. **Manage stress.**
   The holidays don’t need to take a toll on your health. Keep a check on over-commitment and over-spending. Balance work, home, and play. Get support from family and friends. Keep a relaxed and positive outlook. Get enough sleep.

4. **Travel safely.**
   Whether you’re traveling across town or around the world, help ensure your trip is safe. Don’t drink and drive, and don’t let someone else drink and drive. Wear a seat belt every time you drive or ride in a motor vehicle. Always buckle your child in the car using a child safety seat, booster seat, or seat belt according to his/her height, weight, and age. Get vaccinations if traveling out of the country.
Be smoke-free. Avoid smoking and breathing other people’s smoke. If you smoke, quit today! Call 1-800-QUIT-NOW, or talk to your health care provider for help.

Get check-ups and vaccinations. Exams and screenings can help find problems early or before they start. Vaccinations help prevent diseases and save lives. Schedule a visit with your health care provider for a yearly exam. Ask what vaccinations and tests you should get based on your age, lifestyle, travel plans, medical history, and family health history.

Watch the kids. Children are at high risk for injuries. Keep a watchful eye on your kids. Keep potentially dangerous toys, food, drinks, household items, choking hazards (like coins and hard candy), and other objects out of kids’ reach. Learn how to provide early treatment for children who are choking. Develop and reinforce rules about acceptable and safe behaviors for all electronic media.

Prevent injuries. Injuries from falls and fireworks often occur around the holidays. Use step stools instead of furniture when hanging decorations. Leave the fireworks to the professionals.

Most residential fires occur during the winter months. Keep candles away from children, pets, walkways, trees, and curtains. Never leave fireplaces, stoves, or candles unattended. Don’t use generators, grills, or other gasoline- or charcoal-burning devices inside your home or garage. Install a smoke detector and carbon monoxide detector in your home. Test and change the batteries regularly.

Handle and prepare food safely. As you prepare holiday meals, keep you and your family safe from food-related illness. Wash hands and surfaces often. Avoid cross-contamination by keeping raw meat, poultry, seafood, and eggs (including their juices) away from ready-to-eat foods and eating surfaces. Cook foods to the proper temperature. Refrigerate promptly. Do not leave perishable foods out for more than two hours.

Eat healthy, and be active. With balance and moderation, you can enjoy the holidays the healthy way. Choose more vegetables and fruit. Select just one or two of your favorites from the host of tempting foods. Find fun ways to stay active, such as dancing to your favorite holiday music. Be active for at least 2½ hours a week. Help kids and teens be active for at least 1 hour a day.

To learn more, including the holiday song The 12 Ways to Health, visit www.cdc.gov/family/holiday
Helping Children Cope With Holiday Stress: Tips for Parents

For most children the holidays are happy, fun and exciting. There's a break from school, and a chance to see friends and relatives. There may be special food, music and family traditions. However, for some children, the holidays can be stressful and confusing. Family plans and celebrations may be complicated by divorce, separation or remarriage. The holidays can be a difficult time for children who have lost a parent, sibling or close relative.

The holidays often remind children of what has changed in their lives. For example, a child from a divorced family may feel sad on some level because he misses the "intact" family he used to have. A child whose parent is on active military duty may feel it's unfair that her father or mother needs to be away over the holidays.

The following are some tips for parents to help children cope with holiday stress.

1. Discuss holiday plans in advance, and let kids participate in decisions. Kids need some degree of predictability. Prolonged uncertainty, constantly changing plans or last-minute decisions can all increase stress.
2. If you're traveling, leave plenty of extra time and bring snacks, books, games and/or music.
3. Don't over schedule. You may not be able to do everything or see everyone. Kids can easily get "burned out," overtired and cranky during the holidays.
4. Give kids some "down time." Don't expect them to be "on" all the time. Leave room for some quiet activities, like listening to music, taking a walk or reading a book.
5. Make sure kids get plenty of sleep. While it may be exciting to stay up late, lack of sleep often leads to increased irritability.
6. Let kids be honest about their feelings. Don't force them to act happy and excited if they're feeling quiet or down.
7. Don't promise things you can't produce. For example, don't promise a parent will be home in time for the holidays if the decision is really out of your control. Don't promise someone will call if they're in an area with limited phone service.
8. Uphold and maintain family traditions even if a parent is absent. Kids count on certain traditions. They can have an important grounding effect by letting kids know that even though some things have changed, other things have remained the same.
9. Don't try to compensate for an absent parent with extra gifts or toys. What most kids really want is your time, attention and reassurance.
10. Take care of yourself. Try to avoid being overloaded with obligations. If you feel stressed, it increases the pressure and tension on your children.

Most kids, even those dealing with loss or family transitions, can and do enjoy the holidays. However, preparation, patience and honesty can help prevent conflict, reduce stress and enhance the holiday season for the whole family.

Source: American Psychiatric Association
Just Breathe: The Importance of Meditation Breaks for Kids

Our kids' brains are tired, and children of all ages really need opportunities where they can take time out each day "unplugged" to relax and focus. Meditation offers this break and helps kids function more effectively and clearly. Children today also have reportedly high stress levels. To help them take a break, the American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP) encourages parents to share meditation with their children—and teachers to incorporate mindfulness training into their lesson plans. The simple act of teaching children how to stop, focus, and just breathe could be one of the greatest gifts you give them.

Meditation Options for Children

Meditative practices have been used since ancient times to improve health and well-being. But, just as an athlete may do different exercises, people who practice meditation often use different types.

The most common types of meditation practice are concentration, mindfulness, movement based, cultivating positive emotions, and emptying. There are specific examples and ways to practice each type. See table.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Types of Meditation Practice</th>
<th>Examples</th>
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| Concentration on a word, thought, sensation, or image | • Transcendental meditation  
• Relaxation response  
• Breath-focused meditation  
• Mantra repetition  
• Meditation on a prayer, mandala, or other image |
| Mindfulness | • Mindfulness-based stress reduction  
• Vipassana |
| Movement-based meditation | • Yoga  
• Tai chi  
• Qi gong  
• Sufi dancing |
| Cultivating positive emotions (such as compassion, forgiveness, gratitude, or loving-kindness) | • Buddhist metta or loving-kindness practices (cultivating compassion and loving-kindness)  
• Institute of HeartMath training (cultivating gratitude or compassion) |
| Emptying | • Centering prayer  
• Waiting on the inner voice or inner light |

Note: Some practices include more than one type of meditation. For example, yoga practices may include meditation on the breath, a word phrase, or sensation as well as movement and postures. All of these practices involve mental training that enhances the ability to focus or sustain attention.

Many meditation practices use breathing techniques to promote a state of calm. Mindfulness meditation on breath, perhaps the most well-known type, involves sitting quietly, resting or closing your eyes and bringing your attention to your breath. When your attention drifts away, which it is likely to do, simply usher your attention back to your breath without judgment. You don’t need years of meditative practice to benefit from this technique, nor do your children.
There's no doubt, however, that sitting still for any length of time can be difficult for some kids. For this reason, a movement-based meditation, such as yoga, may serve as a good introduction.

**Research on the Benefits of Meditation in Children**

Meditation is used to rest the mind, body and spirit. This, in turn, has many mental, physical, and spiritual benefits. Mindfulness meditation, specifically, is gaining a foothold in disease prevention and treatment. A number of studies in school settings also show improved attention and behavior. Some research has shown benefits for attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD), anxiety, depression, school performance, sleep, behavior problems, and eating disorders. For example, a trial of 300 low-income, minority urban middle-schoolers using school-based mindfulness instruction led to improved psychological functioning and lower levels of posttraumatic stress disorder (PTSD) symptoms.

There are also physical benefits as it calms the nervous system and decreases stress hormones. Studies have shown benefits for gastrointestinal symptoms, obesity, headaches, high blood pressure, pain sensitivity, and immune function. For example, a trial looking at the effect of mindful breathing meditation at a summer camp of 166 teens at risk for cardiovascular disease found that breathing awareness produced a reduction in blood pressure and heart rate.

Meditation does not have a set of rules, but there are some tips that can help.

- The length of time and frequency of meditating can vary for different people and different practices. But, pediatricians typically recommend the following time frames:
  - **Preschool children**: A few minutes per day.
  - **Gradeschool children**: 3-10 minutes twice a day.
  - **Teens and adults**: 5-45 minutes per day or more based on preference.

- Try incorporating deep breathing into your children's daily bedtime routine—it can help them wind down for the night and make meditation easier to do when other situations arise.

- Remind gradeschoolers and teens to take a few deep breaths before answering a difficult question at school, taking a test, or before an athletic performance.

- As young children learn to manage strong emotions, deep breathing can be part of the process—especially before and after time outs.

- While meditation can be done on your own, it can also be done with the help of a trained professional. Some counselors and individuals with training in meditation can help others learn and practice meditation.

- Meditation is not currently covered by most insurance plans unless given by a licensed counselor. It is always best to check with your individual plan. Flexible medical spending programs may count meditation training as a medical expense.

- There are multiple ways to learn different practices of meditation. There are books, audio recordings, videos, online training, websites, and even smartphone apps to help children meditate. Choose and practice the one that works the best for you and your child, and enjoy a calmer body, mind and spirit.

**Talk to Your Pediatrician**

Since meditation practices are generally safe and have many possible benefits, they can be used without much risk. As with any lifestyle change, however, it is best to discuss it with your child's pediatrician before adding meditative practices to your child's wellness routine.

Source: [www.healthychildren.org](http://www.healthychildren.org)
Child's Pose (Balasana)

1. Kneel down on the floor with your big toes touching together.
2. Sit back on your heels, and keep your knees hip-width apart.
3. Exhale and bring your chest to rest on top of your thighs. Stretch your arms out in front of you. Relax and breathe deeply, holding this pose for 1 to 5 minutes.
Tree Pose (Vrksasana)

1. Stand up straight and tall, then shift your weight to your left foot and lift your right foot with both your hands.

2. Place your right foot above or below your left knee. Bring your hands together in salutation seal near your heart. Hold this pose for 5 to 8 breaths.

3. Slowly raise your arms over your head and look up toward your hands.

4. Take a few deep breaths, then return your hands to your heart and lower your right leg. Next, do the Tree Pose on the other leg.
Downward Facing Dog Pose
(Adho Mukha Svanasana)

1. Get on the floor on your hands and knees. Keep your palms flat on the floor with fingers spread.

2. Exhale, lift your knees away from the floor and lift your hips to form an upside-down V pose. Hold this pose for a few minutes.

3. To release, exhale and bring your knees to the floor. Relax in Child’s Pose for a minute, then stand up slowly.
Butterfly Pose (Baddha Konasana)

1. Sit on the floor, bend your knees and bring your feet inwards, with the soles of your feet touching together. Inhale deeply, pressing the thighs and knees down toward the floor.

2. Flap both your legs up and down like the wings of a butterfly. Start slow and gradually increase the speed.

3. Slowly straighten your legs out in front of you and relax.
## DECEMBER

### Get Moving Today!

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<tr>
<td>Time to practice your jumping skills. Practice jumping far and high — bend your knees, reach for the sky, and land softly.</td>
<td>Go for a walk. As you walk practice other ways to move, skipping, galloping, sliding, and leaping.</td>
<td>Using a balloon, practice volleying with different parts of your body. Can you keep the balloon in the air using your hand, your thumb, or even your elbow?</td>
<td>Go on an ABC treasure hunt! Move throughout your house finding items that begin with each letter. When you get to an item do a fun movement such as donkey kicks, log rolls, or jumping jacks.</td>
<td>Movement Add On: Working together, create a movement sentence. One person starts by doing one movement, the next person does a new movement, and then do the two movements together. Keep adding new movements.</td>
<td>Enjoy the day by going for a family walk. As you walk together take turns sharing something that is special about your family.</td>
<td>Turn on some relaxing, quiet music as you stretch your body in many different ways. Between each stretch try to relax and breathe.</td>
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### Work on your kicking skills. Kick a pair of rolled up socks from room to room.

- Sit with your family and take turns laughing. Try to make your laugh extra special.
- Time to roll. Clear out some space in your home and roll from one end to the other. First keep your body as straight as you can, then try it with a bent body.
- Roll up some socks and practice your throwing skills - turn, step, throw, follow-through.
- Practice your hopping skills! Hop on each foot, and then hop twice on each foot, etc. Keep on hopping and counting.
- Pretend to skate on paper plates. Add some style and some tricks.

### Find items around your home that make noise. Use these “instruments” as you march through your home in a parade.

- Create an obstacle with chairs and blankets. Practice moving under, over and around.
- Visit every space in your home, but each time you get to a space do five jumps as high as you can and then move to the next space.
- Sort toys as you exercise. Begin by figuring out how to sort – by color, by size – then make piles on different ends of your home. As you find an object move quickly to the correct pile, hop on each foot five times, and then move quickly back to get another toy.
- Use your creativity to make up a new game that uses something from your kitchen. Give your game a funny name.
- Get outside and go for a walk. As you walk breath in through your nose and blow out through your mouth.

### Use the snowflakes from yesterday to make a trail through your home. Can you move through your home without touching the floor and only touching the snowflakes?

- Take a run. Work on moving in a straight line, move your arms front and back, and land lightly on your feet. Celebrate winning the race!
- Family relaxation activity. Turn the lights off and you lay down on the floor. Squeeze and then relax your muscles. Breathe.
- Movement charades: Act our something that has to do with winter. Can anyone guess what you are?
- Indoor snowball fight! Make a bunch of paper balls and have fun throwing them far, near, high, low. Pick them up and do it again.
- Transportation fun: Begin by identifying a different form of transportation and then pretend to do it. Such as riding your bike, driving a big bus or gliding on your roller blades.

### Get outside for a game of tag. If you have snow on the ground, this will be extra good for your body.

- Pretend to float all through your home like a snowflake falling from the sky - float high, float low, float fast, float slow.
- Can you build a tower out of pillows? Practice your underhand throwing skill as you try to knock over the tower.
- Pretend to be animals who play in the snow – walk like a polar bear, a penguin, and a seal.
- Sit across from your parent/caregiver and practice rolling a “snow ball” back and forth – count to 10 as you roll back and forth, and then move further apart and try it again.
- Put mittens on your feet and use them as skates to glide across the kitchen floor.
- What was your favorite activity this month? Give it another try!
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<td>Es hora de practicar tus habilidades de saltar - práctica saltando lejos y alto - dobla las rodillas, alcanza hacia el cielo, y aterriza suavemente.</td>
<td>Ve a caminar. Mientras caminas, practica otros tipos de movimientos...brincando, galopando, resbalando, y saltando.</td>
<td>Usando un globo, practica voleando con diferentes partes del cuerpo. ¿Puedes mantener el globo en el aire usando tu mano, tu pulgar, o hasta tu codo?</td>
<td>Anda en una búsqueda del alfabeto - muévete alrededor de tu casa encontrando objetos que comiencen con cada letra del alfabeto. Cuando encuentres un objeto, haz un movimiento divertido como patear como burro o piruetas.</td>
<td>Aumenta movimiento - Trabajando juntos hagan una oración con movimientos. Una persona comienza haciendo un movimiento, la siguiente persona hace un nuevo movimiento, y luego hacen los 2 movimientos juntos... sigan aumentando otros movimientos.</td>
<td>Disfruta del día yendo a caminar con tu familia. Mientras caminen juntos tomen turnos compartiendo algo que sea especial sobre tu familia.</td>
<td>Toca música suave y relajante mientras estiras tu cuerpo en diferentes maneras. Entre cada estir, trata de relajarte y respira.</td>
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<td>Practica tus habilidades de patear. Patea un par de calcetines viejos que estén enrollados en una bola de habitación a habitación.</td>
<td>Siéntate con tu familia y toma turnos riendo. Trate de que tu risa sea bien especial.</td>
<td>Hora de rodar. Haz espacio en una habitación en tu hogar y rueda de un lado al otro. Primero mantiene tu cuerpo lo más recto que puedas y luego intenta rodar con el cuerpo doblado.</td>
<td>Enrolla unos calcetines y práctica tus habilidades de lanzar...da un paso, lanza, dale seguimiento.</td>
<td>¡Practica tus habilidades de salto! Salta una vez con cada pie, luego salta dos veces con cada pie, etc. Sigue saltando y contando.</td>
<td>Pretende patinar con platos de papel. Dale un poco de estilo y aumenta unos trucos.</td>
<td>Carrera de rompecabezas - Pon piezas de un rompecabezas en un lado de la habitación. Comenzando en el otro lado, corre, levanta una pieza, corre de vuelta y comienza a armar el rompecabezas.</td>
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<td>Encuentra objetos por la casa que hagan ruido. Usa estos “instrumentos” mientras marchas por tu hogar desfilando.</td>
<td>Crea una carrera de obstáculos con sillitas y frazadas. Practica moviéndote por debajo, encima y por el rededor.</td>
<td>Visita cada espacio en tu hogar, pero cada vez que llegues a un espacio salta cinco veces lo más alto que puedas antes de moverte al siguiente espacio.</td>
<td>Clasifica juguetes mientras haces ejercicio. Comienza descifrando como vas a clasificar – por color, por tamaño – luego haz montones en diferentes lados de tu hogar. Al encontrar objetos, muévete rápido hacia el montón correcto, salta de un pie, y muévete rápido para recoger otro juguete.</td>
<td>Usa tu creatividad para crear un nuevo juego que use algo que encontrabas en la cocina. Dale un nombre chistoso a tu juego.</td>
<td>Sal afuera y ve a caminar. Mientras caminas respira el aire por tu nariz y exhala por la boca.</td>
<td>Practica tus habilidades de cortar y haz unos copos de nieve</td>
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<tr>
<td>Usa los copos de nieve de ayer para hacer un camino por tu hogar. ¿Puedes moverte por tu hogar sin tocar el piso y solo tocando los copos de nieve?</td>
<td>Ve a correr – Practica moviéndote en una línea recta, mueve tus brazos hacia adelante y hacia atrás, aterriza suavemente en tus pies. ¡Celebra ser el ganador de la carrera!</td>
<td>Actividad familiar de relajación. Apaga las luces y acuéstate en el suelo. Aprieta todos tus músculos y luego relájatelas. Respira.</td>
<td>Juego de Movimientos - Pretende hacer algo que tenga que ver con el invierno. ¿Puede adivinar otra persona que estas haciendo?</td>
<td>Diversión con transporte – Comienza identificando una forma de transporte diferente y pretende hacerlo. Tal como manejar bicicleta, manejar un autobús, patinar con patines.</td>
<td>Disperse calcetines por toda la sala. Pretende caminar de puntitas en una cuerda floja – cuando lleguen a un calcetín, páraten de un pie, agáchate y recoge el calcetín – mantiene tu balance.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Ve afuera y persigue a otra persona hasta que lo agarres. Tomen turnos. Si hay nieve en el piso será mucho mejor para ejercitar el cuerpo.</td>
<td>Pretende flotar por todo tu hogar como si fueras un copo de nieve cayendo del cielo...flota alto, flota bajo, flota rápido, flota desparp.</td>
<td>Puedes hacer una torre de almohadas y practicar lanzando con el brazo por debajo la cintura. Intenta de derribar la torre.</td>
<td>Imaginen ser animales jugando en la nieve – camina como un oso polar, un pingüino y una foca.</td>
<td>Siéntate al frente tu padre/cuidador y practica rodando ”una bola de nieve” entre los dos – cuenta hasta 10 mientras la ruedas de un lado al otro. Müevanse más atrás e inténtenlo nuevamente.</td>
<td>Pone guantes en los pies y úsalos como patines resbalando por el piso de tu cocina.</td>
<td>¿Cual fue tu actividad favorita este mes? ¡Inténtala nuevamente!</td>
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4 Tips for a Healthy and Stress-Free Lunchbox

Stopped by what to pack in your child’s lunchbox? Stop worrying and learn to love planning.

Whether your child is an athlete who needs extra calories for that after-school game or a teenager trying to maintain a healthy weight, here are four tips from the Food and Drug Administration for making a nutritious and personalized lunch.

Tip 1: Plan Your Meals
The key to filling a lunchbox with wholesome foods that are essential for healthy growth and weight maintenance is planning. That’s the advice of Leila T. Beker of FDA’s Center for Food Safety and Applied Nutrition. She should know: she’s a parent and grandparent with a Ph.D. in nutrition.

Start by planning your family’s meals for the whole week, Beker advises busy caregivers. If that task is too daunting, start smaller by planning lunch for a day or two and progress from there. Duplicate that meal plan for the next week and build on it.

“You have to have a strategy for a healthy life, week by week. Think about what fruits, vegetables, lean protein and whole grains your family will eat so you can shop and have wholesome foods on hand,” Beker says.

Start with the basic four: fruits and vegetables, whole grains for fiber (even if that means cutting off the crust because kids prefer the soft part), dairy and protein. Get your kids involved in helping to pack their lunches and planning family meals. That helps them develop good habits that last a lifetime.

If you have a bagel for breakfast, have a salad for lunch to balance your nutritional needs, she says. If your approach to each day is to grab food on the go, that can become a problem. “If you don’t plan, you become a victim of convenient foods,” she adds.

Tip 2: Base Your Lunchbox on MyPlate
Need help planning meals? MyPlate Kids’ Place (http://www.choosemyplate.gov/kids/) has recipes and meal-planning information geared to different age groups. It also has advice on making healthy meals, cooking at home and developing healthy eating habits.
“Parents should understand that it’s not what you say that matters, but what you do. Your kids are watching what you do. So if you don’t eat healthy foods, they won’t either,” Beker says. “If you don’t eat your vegetables and if you don’t have a balanced diet, why would you expect your child to do any better?”

Then add some fun. Studies show that children will eat more fruits and vegetables if you make it interesting for them, says Shirley R. Blakely, a senior dietitian with FDA’s Office of Nutrition, Labeling & Dietary Supplements. Give them fruits and vegetables they like; add some dressing for dipping.

Replace French fries with a baked potato jazzed up with cottage cheese and cherry tomatoes on top. Mix unusual foods together, such as apples and peanut butter dip. Cut fruits and vegetables into bite-size pieces and fun shapes.

The trick is to give your kids a variety of good foods that are good for them. An apple one day; a pear another; then an orange. Variety isn’t just the spice of life; it’s important for developing healthy habits.

Tip 3: Cut Portions
Kids need smaller portions. Think quarter-cups, tablespoons and half-sandwiches, depending on your child’s size, age and activity level. For a toddler, think tablespoons—not cups.

Cut sandwiches in triangles, Beker says. That reduces the portion and increases the fun. What’s a reasonable portion? Think finger foods that are easily grasped by little hands: cut-up carrots and apples.

“Don’t expect your child to eat as much as you eat. If you do, they will get frustrated, and you’ll get aggravated. They will also be eating too much and won’t develop a healthy habit of eating to satiety. Instead, they will learn to eat by volume,” Beker says.

Families should let children serve themselves at the table for better portion control, she adds.

Tip 4: Read the Label
Understanding the Nutrition Facts label (http://www.fda.gov/Food/IngredientsPackagingLabeling/LabelingNutrition/ucm20026097.htm) is a big step toward a healthier lunchbox. When stocking your pantry, narrow down your choices based on the label. Read the ingredients and check for sources of fats and sugars in the food, Beker says.

When shopping for food, pick one item at a time to read the Nutrition Facts label, she adds. That way you can focus your choices on foods that provide healthier nutrient contributions to the daily intake. Next time you go shopping, check the labels of still other products.

Just because something is low fat doesn’t mean it has fewer calories. Sometimes another food with a little more fat is a better overall choice because it’s more balanced.

You don’t need to add extra fat or sugar to make tasty and healthy meals for your kids, Beker says. But remember: You can’t make them without planning.
En esta página:
Consejo No. 1: Planifique las comidas
Consejo No. 2: Siga las indicaciones de MiPlato para llenar la lonchera
Consejo No. 3: Reduzca el tamaño de las raciones
Consejo No. 4: Lea la etiqueta

¿No sabe qué poner en la lonchera de su hijo? Deje de preocuparse y aprenda a disfrutar planificando los almuerzos. Si su hijo es un deportista que necesita calorías adicionales para jugar un partido al salir de la escuela, o es un adolescente que trata de mantener un peso saludable, estos cuatro consejos de la Administración de Alimentos y Medicamentos (FDA, por sus siglas en inglés) le ayudarán a preparar un almuerzo nutritivo y personalizado.

Consejo No. 1: Planifique las comidas

La clave para llenar una lonchera con alimentos saludables que son esenciales para crecer sano y mantener el peso es la planificación. Ese es el consejo de la Dra. Leila T. Beker, del Centro para la Seguridad Alimentaria y la Nutrición Aplicada de la FDA. Ella debería saberlo; es una madre y abuela con un doctorado en nutrición.

Comiencen planificando las comidas de la familia para toda la semana, recomienda la Dra. Beker a los padres y madres ocupados. Si esa tarea es demasiado intimidante, empiecen poco a poco y planifiquen el almuerzo para uno o dos días. Repitan el mismo plan de comidas para la semana siguiente y vayan ampliándolo progresivamente.

“Hay que tener una estrategia para llevar una vida sana, semana a semana. Piensen en qué frutas, verduras, proteína magra y cereal integral comerán sus familias para poder hacer la compra y llenar la despensa con alimentos saludables”, indica la Dra. Beker.

Empiecen con los cuatro más básicos: frutas y verduras, alimentos de trigo integral para obtener fibra (aunque esto signifique que tengan que cortar la orilla del pan porque los niños prefieren la parte blanda), productos lácteos y proteína. Hagan que sus hijos ayuden a preparar sus almuerzos y a planificar las comidas de la familia. Esto les ayuda a desarrollar buenos hábitos que durarán toda la vida.

Si comen rosquillas (bagels) para desayunar, coman ensalada para almorzar para equilibrar las necesidades alimentarias. Si simplemente eligen la comida al salir de casa, esto puede convertirse en un problema. “Si no planificamos, nos convertimos en víctimas de los alimentos que nos resultan más cómodos”, añade la Dra. Beker.

Consejo No. 2: Siga las indicaciones de MiPlato para llenar la lonchera

¿Necesita ayuda para planificar las comidas? En la sección dirigida a los niños de MiPlato hay recetas e información para planificar comidas dirigidas a niños de distintas edades. También se ofrecen consejos sobre cómo preparar comidas saludables, cocinar en casa y desarrollar hábitos alimentarios sanos.

“Los padres deben entender que lo importante es no lo que digan, sino lo que hagan. Los niños observan lo que los padres hacen. Así que si estos no comen alimentos saludables, los niños tampoco lo harán”, señala la Dra. Beker. “Si los padres no comen verduras y no siguen una dieta equilibrada, ¿por qué hemos de esperar que nuestros hijos lo hagan mejor?”
Tampoco hay que olvidarse de hacer las comidas entretenidas. Los estudios han demostrado que los niños comen más frutas y verduras si les resultan interesantes, dice Shirley R. Blakely, especialista en nutrición de la Oficina de Nutrición, Etiquetado y Suplementos Dietéticos de la FDA. Ofrézanles frutas y verduras que les gusten; añadan aderezos para untar. Sustituyan las papas fritas con una papa asada adornada con requesón y cubierta con tomates cereza. Mezcle alimentos que no suelen servirse juntos, como manzanas y mantequilla de cacahuates. Corte las frutas y verduras en trozos pequeños y con formas divertidas. El truco es darles a los niños distintos alimentos saludables que son buenos para ellos. Una manzana un día; una pera al siguiente; una naranja el tercer día. La variedad no es sólo la sal de la vida; es importante para desarrollar hábitos saludables.

**Consejo No. 3: Reduzca el tamaño de las raciones**

Los niños necesitan raciones más pequeñas. Piensen en raciones de un cuarto de taza, cucharadas y medios emparedados, dependiendo del tamaño, edad y nivel de actividad del niño. En el caso de los bebés que están aprendiendo a caminar, el tamaño de las raciones debe medirse en cucharadas, no en tazas. Corten los emparedados en triángulos, indica la Dra. Beker. Esto reduce el tamaño de las raciones y hace la comida más entretenida. ¿Cuál es el tamaño de una ración razonable? Piensen en alimentos que los niños puedan agarrar fácilmente con sus pequeñas manos: zanahorias, manzanas cortadas. “No esperen que sus hijos coman tanto como ustedes. Si lo hacen, les causarán frustración a ellos y dolores de cabeza a ustedes. También comerán demasiado y no desarrollarán el hábito saludable de comer hasta estar saciados. En su lugar, aprenderán a comer por volumen”, indica la Dra. Beker. Las familias deben dejar que los niños se sirvan a sí mismos durante la comida para controlar mejor el tamaño de las raciones, añade.

**Consejo No. 4: Lea la etiqueta**

Entender la etiqueta de información nutricional es un gran paso para poder preparar una lonchera más saludable. Al llenar la despensa, acoten sus opciones en función del contenido de la etiqueta. Lean la lista de ingredientes y presten atención a aquellos que son fuentes de grasas y azúcares, indica la Dra. Beker.

Al comprar comida, elijan los alimentos de uno en uno y lean la etiqueta de información nutricional, añade. Así podrán elegir los alimentos que contribuyan los nutrientes más sanos a la comida diaria. La próxima vez que vayan de compras, lean las etiquetas de otros productos.

Que algo sea bajo en grasa no quiere decir que tenga menos calorías. A veces, un alimento con algo más de grasa es una opción mejor porque es más equilibrado.


Este artículo está disponible en la página de Artículos para el Consumidor de la FDA, en la cual se publican las últimas novedades sobre todos los productos regulados por la FDA.

Source: [http://www.fda.gov/ForConsumers/ConsumerUpdates/ConsumerUpdatesEnEspanol/ucm412131.htm](http://www.fda.gov/ForConsumers/ConsumerUpdates/ConsumerUpdatesEnEspanol/ucm412131.htm)
Warm Baked Apples
with
Dried Cherries, Raisins and Blueberries

6 Golden Delicious or Granny Smith apples
3 tablespoons frozen orange juice concentrate
1 cup dried cherries, blueberries, and raisins
½ cup light brown sugar
6 teaspoons honey
2 tablespoons safflower or canola oil

Brush 6 cupcake molds with the oil to prevent sticking.
Use melon baller to scoop the stem and the core of each apple, poke a few holes into the top of the apple with a fork to prevent the heat from splitting them, then place into cupcake molds.
Place a half tablespoon of orange juice concentrate each into the center of each apple. Fill with dried fruits and sprinkle brown sugar over the tops. Drizzle with honey and bake at 300° for 30 minutes or until apple is soft. Serve warm.
Serves 6.
Fruit and Oatmeal Bars

6 tablespoons grapeseed oil, or other neutral oil, plus extra for brushing pan
2 cups Quick Oats
½ cup mixed seeds, such as pumpkin, sunflower and sesame
½ cup honey
⅛ cup dark brown sugar
⅛ cup maple syrup
Pinch of salt
1 ½ cups mixed dried fruit, such as raisins, cherries, apricots, papaya, pineapple and cranberries (at least 3 kinds, cut into small dime size pieces if large)
1 teaspoon ground cardamom or cinnamon.

Heat oven to 350°. Line a 9 inch square baking pan with parchment paper or foil, letting a few inches hang over side of pan. Brush with oil.
Spread oats and seeds on another baking pan and toast in oven just until golden and fragrant, 6 to 8 minutes, shaking pan once.
In a saucepan, combine oil, honey, brown sugar, maple syrup and salt. Stir over medium heat until smooth and hot. In a mixing bowl, toss together toasted oats and seeds, dried fruit and cardamom. Pour hot sugar mixture over and stir until well combined.
While mixture is warm, transfer to prepared pan, pressing into pan evenly with an offset spatula.
Bake until brown, 25 to 30 minutes. Transfer pan to a rack and let cool completely. Using the overhanging foil or paper, lift out of pan and place on a work surface. Cut into bars, about 1 ½ inches by 3 inches.
Serves 9.