

How to Guide to Keep Your Child Healthy

Simple steps parents can take to develop good health habits contribute to your child's overall health. Teaching your children at an early age the following simple habits will help them to avoid illness throughout their lifetime.

1. Wash Their Hands

Teaching your child that daily hand washing; several times a day, will prevent the spread of illness. Using warm water and soap and scrubbing the hands for 20 seconds will reduce germ exposure and cut down on colds and other illnesses. Remember to sing the ABC or Happy Birthday song while scrubbing the hands. When warm water is not available hand sanitizer may be used. However, you must scrub the hands for 20 seconds and allow the hand sanitizer to air dry to reduce the germs and spread of illness.

2. Teach the T-Zone

Hands should be kept away from the face at all times. Touching the T-zone (eyes, mouth, and eyes) invites germs into the body.

3. Cough and Sneeze Etiquette

Young children can learn to sneeze and cough into their elbow and not the hands. Preschool children learn quickly this practice and have the ability to understand that coughing into the hand spreads illness.

4. Avoid Sharing Personal Items

Teach your children not to share personal items such as hats, coats, backpacks, brushes and combs, and food with others. A good habit is to have personal space with eating to avoid spreading illness.

5. Avoid Contagious Illness

During times of peak illness avoid large crowds, taking the whole family especially young children to the market, movies, or hospitals to visit family members. Enjoy family time at home to keep the family healthy. Movie nights, camping in the living room, family walks in uncrowded areas, arts and crafts are all ideas to keep the family busy but away from crowds where illness may be spread.

6. Eat Well and Rest

Eating a wide variety of fruits, vegetables, grains, and meat will provide nutrients to keep your body strong and healthy. Avoid sugary snacks and drinks. Make meal time a special event in the family, preparing different dishes together and eating at the table without the TV, cell phone, or other devices interrupting family time. Set times for bedtime and stick to the time as much as possible. Children need at least 9-10 hours a sleep every night. They have growing minds and bodies. Make sure their rooms are cool at night, no TVs or devices that give off a blue light. Put cell phones away. Set a routine of bath time, reading time, lights down low, and quiet conversation to encourage a good night sleep for children and adults.

7. Well checks and Immunizations

Establish a health care provider for your child and family. Routine medical care and dental care is necessary throughout life to maintain a healthy body. Discuss with your provider routine immunizations to prevent disease. Include in the discussion the yearly flu vaccine. See your school nurse for a list of local providers and resources for care if you lack insurance.

For more information contact your school nurse, your health care provider or visit the CDC (Center for Disease Control) Healthy Family website for more tips