

PENNY SAVER NEWS

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It recently hit the news that some doctors might be prescribing medications for children to lower their cholesterol. Cholesterol in children? Unfortunately yes! And high blood pressure, adult diabetes and other diseases that used to belong just to adults are also showing up in children as well. What is happening to us?

One part of the problem is what everyone wants to blame - obesity. Too many of us, children and adults, are carrying too many pounds around for our own good.

Anyone who has ever tried to lose weight knows it's not easy to get rid of. That same problem is being documented with cholesterol and blood pressure. Children who have high cholesterol levels or high blood pressure in their early teens or before are much more likely to still have those problems as adults. There are many other factors too.

That's why it is so important to teach our children healthy living and eating patterns early. Get them started on the right road and they'll still be running well years later. But when they get started on unhealthy habits, it's hard to change later.

What are some good habits to practice while you preach? Kids learn what they see, so just preaching won't do. You need the good habits too, so pick a few actions here that are not habits yet and give them a try.

Start by looking at good nutrition. Does your family get at least 5 servings of fruits and vegetables a day? It doesn't matter if they're fresh or cooked, canned or frozen. They will all boost your health. Have at least one fruit with the breakfast you

eat every day. Breakfast eaters are more likely to get all their nutrients, and maintain a healthier weight. Along with those veggies, get at least half your grain products as whole grains. There are plenty of whole grain breads, pastas, cereals and other products on the market these days.

Get your calcium. The best source of this precious mineral is fat free dairy products. Calcium fortified soy products and orange juice are good too. Your blood pressure will appreciate it. Round out your protein needs with beans, nuts, seafood, poultry and lean meat. Aim for at least several meals with vegetable protein each week.

Pay attention to your body. Enjoy what you eat. Just eat when you are hungry, not bored or anxious. And stop eating when your body says it's ready. Those few more bites on the plate will do more damage to your heart than to the garbage disposal.

Water is good for drinking, certainly. Get several glasses of milk and one of fruit juice. But sugar-free coffee, tea and sodas are okay for adults. Watch out for those empty calories.

Take care of your body by exercising too. Aim for at least 45 to 60 minutes of activity a day. Find something you can enjoy with your children, grandchildren or neighbors and do it. Brush your teeth, use your seatbelt and bike helmet, use sunscreen when you'll be out for more than 15 minutes. On the other hand, don't use tobacco or drugs, and limit the alcohol.

Finally, get enough sleep. Enough sleep not only keeps you feeling alert and alive, it helps manage diabetes and may be a factor in blood pressure and cancer development. Hit the sack, not the channel changer.

Here's a colorful veggie recipe the kids can help you prepare. It only takes a few minutes so you won't overheat the kitchen. For variety you can try other spices such as Italian seasoning or taco seasoning, or use some different vegetables. Green beans, sugar peas or thinly sliced carrots would be great in this too. Start with what your family likes, then try something different the next time.

Veggies with Herbs

2 T water	1 C green zucchini squash, sliced thinly
1 ½ C yellow summer squash, sliced	½ C green pepper, sliced thinly
½ C celery, sliced across the stalk	¼ C onion, chopped
½ tsp caraway seed	1/8 t garlic powder
1 medium tomato, cut into 8 wedges	

Heat water in large frypan. Add zucchini, squash, pepper, celery and onion. Cover and cook over moderate heat until the vegetables are just barely tender, about 4 minutes. Sprinkle seasonings over vegetables. Put the tomato wedges on top. Cover again and cook over low heat another 2 minutes, just until the tomato wedges are hot. Serves 4.

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