



Fall Into Healthy Living

Fall is here with its busy “back to school” schedules and if-y weather. Even in these conditions, with a little creativity and improvisation, it’s possible to keep up healthy practices.

The Montelores Early Childhood Council has adopted a national campaign called 5-2-1-0 to increase children’s health in our community: 5 servings of fruits and vegetables, 2 hours or less of recreational screen-time, 1 hour or more of physical activity, and 0 sugary drinks every day. Here are some easy ideas that can help every family adopt that message.

On a rainy day it can be tempting to turn on the television for the kids, grab some take-out, and get the housework done. Instead, getting the children involved in household chores is a fun (and free) way to get the whole family up, moving and keep the TV off.

Here are three ideas for some clean-up games:

Laundry Hamper Basketball: Have everyone gather the clothes that need to be cleaned and make a pile. Set a laundry hamper in a place away from anything breakable. Have the kids toss all of the clothes in the hamper! Sweet, simple, and now Mom or Dad can start the wash! (Younger children will delight in getting some help from Mom or Dad to get a “slam dunk”.)

Dirty Dish Run: Start in the kitchen and set a timer. Have your child(ren) run around the house gathering dishes that need to be cleaned. Make sure children are walking while actually carrying dishes and any knives are off limits. The one who finishes first wins!

Sock Hop: Have everyone put on their favorite silly socks or slippers, turn on some music and dance! This is a great activity on its own, but to kick it up a notch you can hand out dusters, brooms, mops, or a vacuum and get the house sparkling in a jiffy.

Now that you have a clean house (or clean enough that you can “re-touch” after the children are asleep) you can concentrate on what’s for dinner. Keeping your family fit and healthy is challenging, especially on a budget or with picky eaters, but it is possible. One of the easiest ways to make a healthy difference is by changing what your family is drinking. Sugary drinks are not healthy for anyone, especially in the prevention or management of diseases such as diabetes in children. Water and milk are the best choices. One serving of 100% fruit juice (no sugar/ high fructose corn syrup added) can be a good choice once a day. This also provides one of five recommended servings of fruits and vegetables. The easiest way to successfully make this change is by not buying soda. If it’s not in the house then you’re not tempted to drink it, and your children can’t ask for it. The money saved can go towards the juice, which is a bit pricey.

There are ways to sneak those five servings of vegetables in, too! Vegetables can be mixed into soups, meatloaf, and smoothies easily. Make them in big batches and freeze for quick meals

during busy weekdays. All recipes can include fresh or frozen fruit and vegetables. All are perfect for warm or cold weather!

Any soup has great opportunity to throw veggies in. My family's favorite is Beef Minestrone. It's as simple as stew meat, tomato sauce, beef broth, noodles, garbanzo beans, any veggies on hand, and seasonings your family likes... cook until meat is done and noodles and veggies are tender.

A package of frozen mixed vegetables can be chopped in a food processor and hidden into any meatloaf recipe. Spinach and peas can easily mix into a smoothie made with yogurt, juice, and any fresh or frozen fruit. Blend into desired consistency and serve or freeze into single serving sizes.

The most important thing is to keep trying. Every day brings a new opportunity to make healthy choices for you and your family!

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