



Happy Healthy Kids 101

by Emily Geizer



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3 Steps to Raising Healthy Eaters

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Introduction

Every mom wants the very best for her kids. The best friends, best experiences, best teachers, best manners, and the best opportunities. Right?

This begins in the kitchen, believe it or not! The food we eat has been shown to play a significant role in our moods, our brain power, our physical health, and overall wellness. This is true for you and for your kids!

If raising healthy eaters feels like an uphill battle, then you are in the right place! I would love to turn this around for you so that you can raise the healthiest eater in just 3 simple steps.

Step #1: 5 Changes Every Family Must Make

1 - Raise a Grazer

Young kids do best when they eat balanced mini-meals every few hours. This way of eating drastically improves behavior, school performance, energy levels, and even sleep.

The best way to make this change is to rethink snack options. Snacks are often the time we grab the processed, refined carbohydrates. Instead, center the snack around a healthy fruit, vegetable, protein, and fat. With a bit of foresight, you can have healthy snacks at the ready.

Check out your Snack-Time Bonus for simple mini-meal recipes.

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2 - Feed Your Kids Growing Foods

In my family we use the term “growing foods” to denote healthy foods (the why is built right into it!). All young kids want to grow, after all. Just like you would probably be more likely to eat something called healthy food rather than sickening food, right?

What are Growing Foods?

First and foremost, growing foods are nutrient dense. That means they are rich in nutrients! Growing foods have straightforward ingredients, because they are whole foods or real foods, such as fruits and vegetables, whole grains, nuts and seeds, healthy fats, and proteins.

Growing foods fuel the body and brain for peak performance and development.

Best Growing Foods for Kids:

- Salmon (wild)
- Berries
- Nuts
- Eggs
- Greens
- Variety of Vegetables
- Beans
- Flaxseeds
- Oatmeal
- Avocados



3 - Boost Brain Power

Smart foods build smart brains. Our diet is our brain cells' diet too! The food we eat feeds the trillion or so cells in our brains, called neurons.

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To feed our neurons the best brain food, we need the right carbohydrates combined with the right fats and proteins so the brain can make healthy cells and operate like a well-oiled machine.

What are the right fats?

Eat smart, high quality fats for a smart, high quality brain. These are the Omega 3 fats included in seafood, avocados, nuts, and seeds. Coconut oil and organic butter are also high-quality fat options.

What are smart carbohydrates?

The smartest carbohydrates are those without ingredient lists. They are unrefined. Smart carbohydrates include whole grains, fruits, and vegetables.

What is smart protein?

The best protein comes from healthy, sustainable raised animals, eggs, greek yogurt, tempeh, nuts, and seeds. High protein food perks up the brain and helps kids perform at their best.

Begin the day with a brainy breakfast. Many children skip breakfast or grab a junky carb on their way out the door. While this may fill their bellies for the short term, it does nothing to fuel their brains. Remember, a brainy breakfast is chock full of protein, healthy fat, and carbohydrates.

When your kid starts her day this way, she will be better behaved, a more adept learner, and maintain a healthy weight with ease.

4 - Feed the Immune System

What you feed your kids makes a BIG difference in how often (and how severely) they get sick. There's a reason your grandmother used to nag you to eat your fruits and vegetables. It turns out she knew best how to keep you healthy!

All of the phytonutrients in these foods fight the germs that bombard you and your kids. Healthy food is nature's antibiotic! And the good news is that these foods have no negative side effects, unlike many prescription medicines.

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Different foods contain different phytonutrients. To get the maximum medicinal benefit from foods, feed your child an array of colors. The darker the color and stronger the flavor, often the more phytonutrients it contains.

BONUS - Eating this way also manages inflammation, which is a buzz word these days in health and wellness. It turns out that inflammation is behind most age-related diseases. To protect your children from disease, feed them an anti-inflammatory diet *now* to keep their cells and immune system in tip-top shape.

5 - Teach Your Kids to Be Food Detectives

Empower your kids by teaching them *how* to eat for their health and wellness. They actually want to know...even your toddler!

Using the term growing food will help tremendously! Teach your kids specifically about foods that don't help with growing. We call those foods fillers, such as pasta or bread or cereal. Then there's the occasional foods, like cupcakes and other junk that stays out of the house but might creep into their mouths on occasion.

Occasional food actually hurts the body. It leaches, or takes away, many of the vitamins and minerals that we work so hard to put in. That's why we only eat it occasionally, if at all. These foods contain white flour, sugar, hydrogenated oils, high fructose corn syrup, food dyes, and preservatives.

Help your kids to understand that when they eat food with these ingredients, it makes their bodies slow and their brain not work well. On the other hand, growing food makes kids faster, stronger, and smarter!

Learn more tricks for this below in step 2.

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Turn your pickiest eater into a veggie lover!

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Step#2: Turn the Pickiest Kids into Healthy Eaters

Take a moment and imagine your kids
begging for veggies.

You don't have to be supermom to make this your
reality!

Here is a fail-proof tactic for getting kids on board with healthy eating. It involves three specific strategies, education, involvement, and consistent action.

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Educate

This first strategy is to educate kids. Children are hungry for information as they try to make sense of our big world. Feed their curiosity with information.

[Recent research](#) has shown that kids readily **choose** healthy food over junk food when they really understand *the why*, i.e., how their choices affect their body and performance.

This research stood true even with young preschoolers. Of course, the information needs to be relayed in an age appropriate manner, without oversimplifying it too drastically.

When making a change to a healthier diet and lifestyle, your kids will want to know why. Give them the answers. Talk about it often. When your child understands *WHY* she is doing something...and it resonates with her own story, then she will be much more likely to embrace change.

What to convey to your kids about why healthy eating matters:

- growing foods keep us healthy, strong, fast, and smart.
- unhealthy foods (high fructose corn syrup, hydrogenated oils, food dyes, white flour, preservatives) make us feel mad, grumpy, sick, tired, annoyed, depressed, and even dumb!
- the food we eat should be *grown* on a plant, rather than *made* in a plant.

Remember, the why has to be in her language. For example, if she's into superheroes, then you'll talk about how eating spinach or broccoli makes her more like her favorite superhero and how eating sugar and other unhealthy food makes her lose her superhero powers. Get creative!

Let her know that she can grow stronger, healthier, faster, and smarter in part by what she eats and in part by how she spends her time. Kids are dying to know this information!

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Involve

The second strategy is to involve your kids in the change. Why? Well, kids often feel disempowered or out-of-control when change occurs, and that's a recipe for a power struggle. The best cure is to involve your child in the process.

As soon as you involve your child and give her some choices, then she has some skin in the game too. Kids love to contribute to the family in a meaningful way!

How you choose to involve your child depends on her age and interests, but shopping, cooking, prepping, choosing recipes, are all good places to start. Choices are huge, so look for opportunities to give your child choices (choices you feel good about) whenever possible. When grocery shopping, you might ask your child to choose one green vegetable or choose one purple fruit.

Make it fun. Focus on continents or regions. Focus on colors. Get adventurous and playful with food in a way that might excite your kiddo.

Consistent & Persistent Action

You are not turning your child into a health nut overnight. Health is a process, not a destination. This is not something you can check off a to-do list once and for all.

Choose one area to focus on at a time and stay consistent and persistent.

Start where you are. You do not need to revamp everything at once. In fact, that won't be sustainable. Sustainable change happens with small actions over and over.

Where do you want to start?

- Upgrading breakfast?
- Improving snack options?

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- Serving more vegetables at dinner?
- Another idea?

Start with one and make that your focus until it feels natural.

For example, if your child eats a sugary breakfast, such as cereal, toaster pastries, bagels, or waffles, upgrade it by adding some fresh fruit. After a few days you'll add some healthy protein. A few days later you'll look into bringing in some healthy fat. This upgrade may include substituting a healthier pancake or muffin recipe. Over time, you can introduce healthier options altogether.

Incremental upgrades will enable a healthier shift that feels organic and can go virtually unnoticed by your kiddo. Keep the big picture in mind. It doesn't matter so much if she eats the spinach on her plate tonight, but rather that you are raising a healthy eater overall.

Research has shown that it can take 15 tries before a child develops a taste for something. So don't give up. If she doesn't like salad the first time, try again. And simply say, "you don't like it today. that's okay. we'll try it again another time."

Step #3: Your Role as Parent

Research shows that you, the parent, are the primary role models in the field of nutrition for children 12 years and younger. Take advantage of this opportunity!

During this time, you have more influence over your child's choices than their friends, other family members, advertisements, and even the colorful boxes on the grocery store shelves!

The devil is in the details here. For some, this may feel like the hardest step in the process of raising a healthy eater, especially if your own eating is not modeling material. That's okay. It is never too late to start! In fact, your kids will be inspired knowing that this isn't second nature for you. You are in it together! You are on the same team.

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Because even as self-aware grown ups and parents, change is hard!

If you and your kids can adopt a team mentality for making healthy changes, your success will be easier and your child will be healthier and happier too.



Consider the following questions:

- Are you the eater that you want your child to be?
- Do you love to eat fruits and vegetables?
- Do you eat an array of fresh, wholesome food at every meal?
- Do you avoid the junky, convenience foods?

Most parents fall somewhere on a spectrum and chances are you could benefit from upgrading your own diet too. I'm not going to pretend that making these changes on your own will be easy. I know from personal experience how incredibly hard it can be to make lasting change without support. The times I've been most successful have been when I've had a system to follow, support from family, friends, mentors, and a coach to hold me accountable.

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Change can be hard, which is why I'm here to help you get on a healthy eating plan that will benefit you and your whole family. So, let's talk about how you can be the healthy eating model that your child needs.

Following the same healthy eating guidelines that I outlined for your kids will be enormously beneficial for your waistline, energy tank, and overall health, whether you're managing a chronic illness or looking to prevent one!

Additionally, the 3 most powerful changes that you can make to your diet to be the ultimate role model are:

1. **Swap out** processed foods for whole foods: fruits, vegetables, whole grains, nuts, and seeds
2. **Slow down**, sit down, and tune in while you eat, even at breakfast. Take the opportunity to eat together as a family as often as possible. This is a perfect time for modeling healthy eating.
3. **LOVE your healthy foods!** Audibly celebrate how good they make you feel. Really. Celebrate your salad. Ooh and ahh over vegetables instead of the ooey gooey dessert. Let your kids see that.

These changes alone will create a ripple effect for your children! It may take some time, so even if you don't see the change immediately, keep it up. You are planting seeds that can last a lifetime.

Wishing you all the best with this journey!
Let me know if I can support you.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Emily". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long, sweeping tail that loops back up towards the end of the name.