

Tips to keep children fit, healthy

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Although recent CDC reports indicate improvements in 19 states, many children remain overweight or obese. Stephanie Walsh, a pediatrician, medical director for child wellness at Children's Healthcare of Atlanta, and mother says success with kids is about behavior. "You change your behavior and your weight will find its place."

Q: What should parents focus on to improve their children's health?
Answer: "Focusing on weight doesn't help children because they are changing, growing and going through puberty. If you focus on weight, you're missing what's important. Focus on healthy habits," says Walsh. "Set short-term goals with your kids that are achievable."

Strong4Life of Georgia suggests four healthy habits:

1. Make half your plate veggies and fruits.
2. Be active for 60 minutes.
3. Drink more water and limit sugary drinks.
4. Limit screen time to one hour.



THINKSTOCK

Q: What can tired, busy, parents do to get their family active?
Answer: "Even if you took your kids out for 15 minutes, it doesn't have to be an hour all at once," Walsh says. "You don't have to get in the car and drive to the park and stay for a whole hour."

There isn't time for that for a lot of parents, there is 15 minutes before dinner or after dinner.

"Fifteen minutes for a family walk is a start.

"After-school, what if they play outside for 30 minutes before homework? It

might not work for your family, but some children might focus better if they have that time before homework." Walsh suggests starting where you are and building up to an hour daily.

Q: With television, tablets and videogames, how do parents manage screen time?

Answer: "Screen time is anything with a screen," Walsh says. "The key is to have a limit.

"Playing active video games is usually not as active as playing outside, but it's something."

Q: Should parents make children join the clean-plate club and eat all their healthy food first, such as veggies, fruit and protein?

Answer: "If you say, 'You have to eat all your dinner before you can have ice cream,' the child may clear his plate and overeat to have dessert," Walsh says. Parents are role models in the home, so grownups, eat your healthy food and encourage, but don't shame children into eating veggies.

Walsh suggests kids eat a balanced diet over the course of days, not necessarily at each meal.

Stone

From page 15

they are not drinking a lot, don't want to give up alcohol. My thing is that I'm not asking them to do it in the long-term. I'm asking them to have a clean week to know what it feels like. You may feel not so great that first week when you are not eating sugar and not having caffeine ... but by that second week, you are ready to eat a diet that's really clean and healthy. And you feel amazing. I want them to feel that."

There's a lot of this plan that looks like a cleanse diet, and it focuses on terms such as "elimination" and "clean." How is this book different from cleanse diets that deprive the body of a lot of foods and, subsequently, nutrition?

"This is about clean eating. If you

told me you were doing a cleanse, I would wonder what kind; is it a juice-only cleanse or water cleanse? ... 'Healthy You!' is about getting to a point where you are eating cleaner, healthy, more-natural unprocessed food. There may be people out there who want to call this a cleanse. Do I? I don't. I see it as a way to eat cleaner and eat healthier."

As a former fitness magazine publisher, you've seen a lot of unhealthy diet ideas. Although you have training in personal fitness and weight management, this book is not written by a medical doctor or licensed dietician. Why is it important that you share your own experience?

"I know that even if I just tell people to eat healthy, I'm going to get criticism. I think I could say that everybody should exercise and I will get criticism ... and that's fine. To me, I know the book is



Dawna Stone, right, with Martha Stewart, won the reality game show "The Apprentice: Martha Stewart" in 2005.

healthy, the program is healthy. I'm not saying you should restrict calories. I'm not saying you can only have a certain amount.

"... It's hard to overindulge on something that's really healthy. It's easy to overindulge on something that's not so

good for you and very calorie dense."

You don't have to exercise to do this diet, but exercise is a huge part of your own long-term ability to stay at a healthy weight. Why not write an exercise book?

"People who know me know that my outlook is about healthy overall living and that I've had an emphasis on food more than anything else. Yes, I owned a fitness magazine and I ran running events and I convinced people to get off the couch and just walk a 5K. ... I think that's also part of healthy living.

"I will never get rid of the part where I believe exercise is important, and I would love to always get people off the couch to do it. But I think a lot of people, until they lose the weight, may never get up and take that step."

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