



## IMPROVE YOUR KIDS' HEALTH

Parents spend a lot of time worrying about the factors that affect a child's health. The good news is that, rather than trying to address countless variables, you can make a big difference by focusing on just a few factors. Here are five that can have a profound impact.

**Eat at home.** This not only will likely lead to better food choices, but countless studies have shown that families that sit down for meals together have stronger communication, deeper relationships and better overall health.

**Clear the air.** Banning smoking in your home not only will reduce your child's risks for asthma, ear infections, respiratory infections and more, it also will reduce the likelihood that they'll be attracted to smoking themselves.

**Get them moving.** Whether your kids participate in organized sports or simply get outside and run around, make sure they move their bodies every day so they learn that exercise is fun and feels great.

**See the doctor.** Regular doctor visits can ensure that your child is on track developmentally, stays up-to-date on immunizations and is generally healthy as well as catch health issues early so treatment can begin quickly.

**Set a good example.** Demonstrate good health habits – exercise, eat well, get plenty of sleep, see the doctor regularly, and so on – and you have a better chance of passing good health habits on to your kids.

## IN THIS ISSUE

- 2 Create Healthy Habits
- 3 Voluntary Benefits
- 4 Harvest of the Month: Strawberries

## Smart Facts

**21%**

of adolescents are obese.

**24%**

of high school students use at least one tobacco product.

**2 in 5**

students have a chronic health condition.



## CREATE HEALTHY HABITS IN KIDS

The best way for kids to grow into healthy adults is for them to learn healthy habits early. The problem is, they typically don't do that naturally. It takes a little grown-up guidance.

The good news? If you do teach your kids to live healthy lives now, they'll likely live healthier lives in the long run. As Kimberly Leek, a Santee, Calif., Pediatrician put it, "With your help, your children will learn to develop healthy habits that last."

Following are a few tips on how to create healthy habits in your kids that will help them live long, healthy lives.

**Get fresh.** Shy away from processed foods and put as much fresh produce on the table as possible. A simple tip: If your food isn't colorful, it probably isn't as healthy as it could be.

**Establish good sleep habits.** Set bedtimes for young ones that allow them to get plenty of sleep. For a guide to prescribed sleep times for different ages, [click here](#).

**Get active as a family.** To get kids moving, move along with them. Play games outside, take up a sport together, make it fun and get everyone involved. Do all of that, and the kids won't realize they're doing something that's good for them.

**Screen their screen time.** Today's young "digital natives" grew up with digital devices, and a lot of their schoolwork, social life and more requires screens. As such, you really can't eliminate devices from their lives. However, you can encourage them to balance screen time with time in the "real world" by nudging them toward more active alternatives and helping them see the fun in screen-free time.

**Stay positive.** In a lot of ways, good health starts with good mental health. Encourage your kids, dole out more positive reinforcement than negative repercussions and celebrate their successes. Cultivating a positive mindset will strengthen their general well-being.

**Talk about it.** Make healthy choices a topic of conversation with kids, addressing even touchy subjects like smoking, alcohol use, substance abuse and sexual activity. But be aware: That doesn't mean you should lecture them on right and wrong. Instead, have open conversations that allow them to ask questions, you to present your perspective and everyone to come to an understanding. Not only will this help kids have reasonable attitudes about healthy choices, but it also will teach them that they can have honest discussions with you... something that just might have the biggest impact of all on their long-term health habits.



*"With your help, your children will learn to develop healthy habits that last."*



# WHAT TO CONSIDER WHEN CONSIDERING VOLUNTARY BENEFITS

As an employee, you might have the opportunity to complement your standard benefits package with additional benefits that are not underwritten by your employer in the way that your health benefits are.

These supplemental – or “voluntary” – benefits can include anything from life insurance to pet insurance, and from critical illness coverage to identity theft protection. And even if your employer isn’t footing a part of the cost, they likely are able to offer these benefits with group discounts that make them less expensive than if you were to purchase them on your own.

So, does that mean you should scoop up these benefits? Maybe, maybe not. Here are some things to consider when deciding whether or not to sign up for them.

**Do you need it?** That might sound like an obvious question, but, then again, if a deal sounds good, you might jump at it without thinking it through. For example, if you’re being offered supplemental life insurance at a good rate, it might seem like you should take it. However, if you already have a policy with solid coverage, you might not need the extra policy. Similarly, while identity theft protection is a smart choice, you might get it through a credit card or credit bureau. The voluntary benefits might be great ... but you should look before you leap.

**Can you afford it?** Even a great deal is a bad deal if you don’t have the money to pay for it. The caution here is to make sure you don’t take so many “small” voluntary benefits that your paycheck gets eaten up by monthly deductions.

**Is it really the best deal?** While group discounts often do result in tremendous savings, that doesn’t mean you can’t find a better deal somewhere else. If you’re considering supplemental life insurance, for example, get comparable price quotes from other sources.

**Are there other factors to consider?** Sometimes cost is not the sole determining factor in these decisions. For example, if you have a health problem that could make it difficult to get life insurance, a group plan through your employer might be a good choice because it typically requires less health underwriting than a purchased policy.

**Do you understand it?** Make sure you fully grasp what your coverage is. For example, if you purchase a disability plan through your work, when will it kick in if you’re disabled, and how does the policy define “disability”? Know such things before signing up.



## Fireworks Safety Month

As powerful fireworks have become more accessible, safety officials have become more earnest in their attempts to remind everyone just how dangerous those fireworks can be. Each year, thousands of people are injured, with most injuries affecting people’s hands, legs and eyes. Nearly all of those injuries are preventable through safety precautions and child supervision. Learn more [here](#).

# HARVEST OF THE MONTH: STRAWBERRY

If you've ever grown strawberries – or battled wild strawberries in the garden – you are aware that they like to spread. What you probably don't realize is that this tendency might have contributed to the juicy red fruit's name. Some language experts suggest that they once were known as "stray berries," due to their habit of straying from one place to another. Over time, the "stray" became "straw," and the name stuck.

Regardless of how it got its name, the strawberry has been a staple in the Americas for centuries, having been cultivated by Native Americans long before Europeans arrived – although the ones they enjoyed were much smaller than the ones we find in markets today.

To get the best strawberries – either in the field or in the supermarket – choose ones that are glossy and bright red, with no traces of white at the stem. Avoid berries that are bruised, moldy or mushy. If you find a moldy berry in a batch



you've already purchased, toss it out ... the mold can spread quickly and ruin a whole batch.

Strawberries are best eaten as quickly as possible and at room temperature; however, if you must store them for a few days, do so in the refrigerator in a basket or bowl lined with paper towels. And wait to wash them until you're ready to serve them.



## Recipe: Strawberry Sheet-Pan Pancakes

### Ingredients:

1 $\frac{1}{3}$  cups white whole-wheat flour  
1 $\frac{1}{3}$  cups all-purpose flour  
2 $\frac{1}{4}$  teaspoons baking powder  
1 $\frac{1}{4}$  teaspoons baking soda  
1 teaspoon kosher salt  
3 cups low-fat buttermilk  
3 large eggs  
 $\frac{1}{2}$  teaspoon almond extract  
1 tablespoon pure maple syrup,  
plus  $\frac{1}{2}$  cup for serving  
 $\frac{1}{3}$  cup unsalted butter, melted  
1 $\frac{1}{4}$  cups thinly sliced fresh strawberries

### Directions:

Preheat oven to 500°. Lightly coat an 18x13-inch rimmed baking sheet with cooking spray. Whisk whole-wheat flour, all-purpose flour, baking powder, baking soda and salt in a large bowl. Whisk buttermilk, eggs, almond extract and 1 tablespoon maple syrup in a medium bowl. Then whisk wet ingredients into dry ingredients, and, finally, gently whisk in melted butter. The batter will be lumpy. Let stand for 5 minutes. Spread the batter in an even layer on the prepared baking sheet. Arrange strawberries on top. Transfer to the oven and immediately reduce temperature to 425 degrees F. Bake the pancake until golden brown and a toothpick inserted in the center comes out clean, 14 to 16 minutes. Cut into 12 pieces and serve with remaining  $\frac{1}{2}$  cup maple syrup.

### Nutrition Information:

CALORIES: 227; SUGARS: 13G; FAT: 7G; CARBOHYDRATES: 35G;  
FIBER: 2G; PROTEIN 7G; SODIUM: 520MG

Sources: Accessed June 5, 2023

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