

# Summer health leads to school readiness

How your child spends her summer will affect her health—and how she does in school next year. That's why it's important to emphasize healthy habits during the summer months.

As a family, make an effort to:

- Be active. Most children should exercise for at least one hour a day. Instead, many watch TV and play video games for hours on end. Make a list of fun physical activities you can do together, such as taking a walk, gardening, visiting a local park and kicking a soccer ball around. Ask your child, "Which would you like to do?"
- Eat well. Involve your child in making healthy meals. You might borrow a cookbook from the library or search for recipes online. Try some new dishes with fruits, vegetables, whole grains and lean proteins. Avoid potentially harmful or unnecessary ingredients, including excess sugar.
- Stay hydrated. This is especially important during activities in hot climates. Remember that every drink doesn't need to be sweetened or flavored. Water is refreshing—and free! If you serve juice, consider diluting it with water. The earlier you start doing this, the less your child will notice.

It's also important to take your child for regular medical checkups. Talk to the pediatrician about vaccines, summer safety, vision, hearing, allergies and other critical topics. Also, remember to keep your child's medical records up to date.

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