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START your child on a healthy lifestyle



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START today

START is a campaign created by parents, for parents. When we met parents, they told us they have a rough idea of what they should do in terms of their child's health but the reality of everyday life gets in the way of doing this.



START is about helping parents to make the right decisions. It's not about being perfect, but it's about starting with a change, sticking with it and getting a small daily win. The good habits that our children learn in the home will stay with them for life.

One of the best ways to promote healthy lifestyle behaviour with your children is for all the family to adopt healthier habits. This can be a challenge but one daily win can start you and your kids on the way to a healthier life. Parenting is tough, but you are tougher.

Let's do this together

Children are better at making changes when the whole family do it together:

“ We're all going to do this together.”

“ Every day we are going to try our best to try new things as a family.”

“ We are doing this so we can all be a bit healthier.”

Four tips to get you started

1. Choose one change at a time

- Change from a sugary breakfast cereal to a wholemeal one.
- Change to water or milk between mealtimes instead of sugary drinks or cordials.
- Delay turning on the TV or tablet for a half hour and encourage play instead.



2. Involve your children

- Pick a good time to talk to start making changes.
- Explain, why as a family, you are making these changes.
- Ask your child what change they could make.

Here are some helpful phrases to get you started:

- “ We, as a family, should eat healthier foods.”
- “ I think we should do more active things together.”
- “ Granny and I are going to eat less treats too.”
- “ We are going to have water or milk with our meals.”

3. Be consistent and stick with it

- Decide on one or two simple rules to guide you through the change.
- Reward the good changes and ignore the bad.
- Don't use treat foods or screen time as a reward.

Starting is hard but it does get easier. Here are some simple ideas you could try:

- “ Our snack after school is fruit.”
- “ Fruit is really good to help our bodies grow strong.”
- “ We sit at the table together to eat breakfast every morning.”
- “ We turn off the TV and put away phones and tablets one hour before bedtime every evening.”

4. What you say matters when it comes to change

Be specific when praising your child, so that they know what they are doing well. You could use the following examples:

- “ Well done on putting your screen away.”
- “ I love chatting with you before bed.”
- “ Thanks for coming on the walk with me this morning. It gave me loads of energy. How do you feel?”
- “ You are great for trying that new vegetable. We all like different types of foods. Let's try a different vegetable every other day.”

START to eat healthy

Eating well is important for us all.
Children learn best by example.



Make small changes to what you:

- buy in the shop
- eat at home
- take to school

Why not make one of these changes your daily win?

Cut down on fat, salt and sugar

Reduce the amount of foods like:

- sweets
- chocolate
- cakes
- biscuits
- bars
- crisps
- ice cream

Limit these foods to once or twice a week and make that your daily win.

Water or milk are best

Give your children water or milk at snack time and with every meal. They are the best drinks to give your children for healthy development.



Give children suitable child-sized portions

For a very young child (around 6 months of age), follow the HSE guidelines on feeding your baby, introducing family meals available on: www.mychild.ie

By the time your baby is 1 year of age, they should be able to eat most meals enjoyed by the rest of the family.

Children's appetites vary from day to day. They depend on:

- the child's age
- if they are going through a growth spurt
- how physically active they are

It's important that you serve them enough nutritious foods and allow them to decide when they are full.

- Use children's size plates, bowls and cups.
- Use a small plate for a child up to 5 years' old.
- Make sure your child is eating smaller servings, a five-year-old needs about half the amount an adult does.
- Follow the guide on portion sizes for 5-12-year-olds on makeastart.ie

Give your children more vegetables, salads and fruit

- Children over 5 years need 5-7 servings each day. See images below for a serving size.










- Younger children can also eat 5-7 servings daily, but in smaller amounts than the images shown.

It is okay to start slowly. Start with one serving a week and increase weekly. Remember vegetables and fruit used in meals also count.

Healthy food for life

Here is a sample weekly menu to get your family started.

	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday
Breakfast at home	1-2 cereal wheat biscuits with low-fat fortified milk. Add some fruit like berries, a banana or raisins for variety.	A bowl of cereal oat biscuits with low-fat fortified milk. Add some fruit like berries, a banana or raisins for variety.	Slice of wholemeal toast thinly spread with jam or reduced-fat spread and glass of low-fat milk. 	A bowl of wholemeal-type cereal with low-fat fortified milk. Add banana for variety.
Snack (little break)	Low-fat yogurt and kiwi.	Orange segments.	A slice of brown bread and a banana.	Cheese and crackers.
Lunch	2 slices of wholemeal bread with a low-fat cheese slice and tomato.	Pitta bread with cooked ham, low-fat mayonnaise, lettuce and cucumber.	Tortilla wrap with a slice of chicken, relish and lettuce with a sliced apple and low-fat yogurt.	Cooked pasta with tuna, sweetcorn and spring onion.
Snack	Fresh fruit. 	2 crackers and cheese.	2 rice cakes.	Packet of plain popcorn.
Dinner	Shepherd's pie. Eat with sweetcorn, green beans and glass of low fat-milk.	Vegetable and bean curry. Eat with boiled rice and glass of low-fat milk.	Spaghetti bolognese and glass of low-fat milk. 	Baked salmon. Eat with lots of vegetables, pasta and glass of low fat-milk.

	Friday	Saturday	Sunday
Breakfast at home	A bowl of porridge with honey or yogurt. Add some fruit like berries, a banana or raisins for variety. 	Slice of wholemeal toast with baked beans or scrambled egg and cherry tomatoes. 	Omelette with lots of fresh or frozen vegetables.
Snack (little break)	Carrot sticks and glass of low-fat milk.	Low-fat yogurt and banana. 	Chopped apple.
Lunch	Brown roll with mashed hard-boiled egg, lettuce, peppers and tomato.	1 wholemeal bap with a lean grilled rasher, tomato and avocado.	Cooked rice, lettuce, tomato and low-fat cheese or tuna.
Snack	Low-fat yogurt.	Small bowl of homemade soup.	Low-fat yogurt.
Dinner	Roast breast of chicken – remove skin. Eat with carrot, parsnip and broccoli with a jacket potato.	Baked white fish and white sauce. Eat with frozen vegetables and mashed potato and glass of low-fat milk. 	Chicken casserole. Eat with lots of vegetables, boiled potato and glass of low-fat milk.

START to be active

Increase your child's levels of physical activity

Physical activity is sport or organised games, running around and having fun!

Children aged over 5

All children aged over 5 years' of age should play and be active for at least 1 hour a day, every day of the week.



Children aged under 5

Children aged under 5 should be active for 3 hours every day (broken up into small blocks of time).

Play can count as activity

Children are naturally active, so any amount of playful physical activity counts towards their 1 hour.

Spending time playing games that cause their heart to beat faster will build their fitness.

Encourage active games

Make sure your child plays active games that they enjoy. When your child is trying new games praise them, encourage plenty of practice to increase their confidence and build their skill levels.

Tips to make physical activity easier

If you are starting from no physical activity, build an extra 10-15 minutes of active play or physical activity gradually into your family's daily routine. Combine different types of activity and games every day. If you are concerned about your families safety check out www.rsa.ie for information on walking and cycling safety.

Active play

This includes:

- playing in the playground
- hopscotch
- scooting
- hide and seek
- dancing to music
- cycling
- chasing
- skipping
- jumping in puddles
- skating



Active treats

Take your children on an outdoor trip to somewhere new or check out what's happening in your local areas. Check out www.getirelandactive.ie



Active travel

Encourage your children to walk or cycle to school. This will reduce the time you and your family spend sitting. Get off the bus a few stops early or just take the car part of the way and walk the rest.

Organised activities and sports

Encourage your children to take part in team sports and activities like:

- soccer
- GAA games (hurling, camogie and Gaelic football)
- rugby
- karate
- dance
- basketball
- tennis
- boxing
- community games



Make it enjoyable and fun

- Include a variety of activities so that being active does not become a chore.
- Join in and be active with your children – they will play more if they have a parent, sibling or friend to play with.
- Check out www.getirelandactive.ie for details of suitable places to be active in your local area.

Younger children

- Newborns and babies need lots of daily tummy time and floor-based play. They should do this every day in short sessions with an adult to guide them. This kind of play will help them to become strong and learn to roll, sit and crawl.
- Avoid keeping babies and young children in car seats or high chairs for longer than is needed.
- When babies are awake, avoid having them sitting for more than 1 hour at a time.

Get up and about

Here are some examples of activities that you and your child can do together that will benefit your them:

Type of activity	Examples
Fairly active	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • cycling • brisk walking • swimming • skateboarding • scooting • rollerblading • hiking • dancing • games of catch and throw
Highly active	<p>Active games involving running and chasing, like:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • tag • cycling fast • jumping rope • running • vigorous dancing <p>Highly active sport also includes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • hurling or camogie • soccer • rugby • basketball • swimming • tennis
Good for muscles	<p>Games that are good for muscles include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • tug of war • rope climbing • swinging or climbing on playground equipment or bars • climbing walls • martial arts like karate
Good for bones	<p>Games good for bones include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • hopscotch • hopping • skipping • jumping • running <p>Also good for bones are sports like:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • gymnastics • basketball • volleyball • tennis

START to spend more time together

Limit screen time

This means spending less time on things like:

- laptops
- computers
- tablets
- smartphones
- video games
- TV



Limit exposure for babies

For children younger than 18 months, avoid the use of screens other than video-chatting.

Watch with your toddler

If children aged 18-24 months are watching digital media, choose a high-quality programme. Watch it with your children to help them understand what they are seeing.

Children aged 2-5

For children aged 2-5 years, limit screen use to 1 hour a day of high quality programmes. You should watch it with your children to help them understand what they are seeing and apply it to the world around them.

Children 6 or over

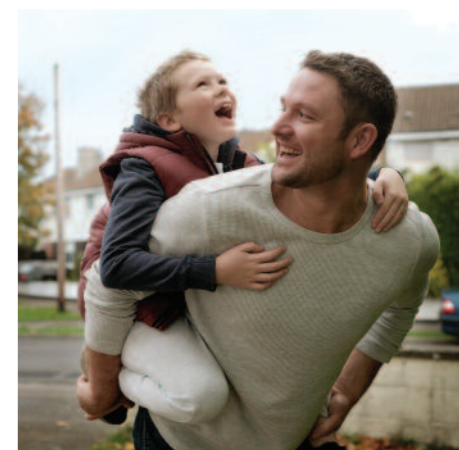
Lead by example – so limit your own screen time too. Make sure screen time does not take the place of physical activity and sleep.

Give exercise and sleep a priority

Use ad breaks as a challenge to get up and move. Don't have the tablet or TV on if no one is watching them.

Screen-free zones

Have some screen-free zones in your house – for example, the bedrooms.



Keep meals screen-free

Make mealtimes screen-free and enjoy your food in each other's company.

Lead by example, so limit your own screen time by reducing TV or tablet to less than 2 hours per day or have TV-free days. You could start the conversation like this:

“ We all like watching our videos and our shows but we watch it for too long.”

“ We're going to cut down on TV by 30 minutes every day and do something more active and fun together.”

“ And all of us have to try, including me.”

We know it can be difficult to take your child away from screens and reduce their time spent on them. It's a daily battle, but it could be your daily win. Take them out to kick a ball, play a game together or encourage them to meet with friends or help you prepare dinner.

START to sleep well

Is your child getting enough sleep?

A good balance of sleep and rest with regular activity is important to help your child grow and learn. Children need to get enough sleep to give them energy to be active. Active children tend to sleep better.

Here's a guide to how much sleep children need.

Your child's age	Your child's needs
About 6 months	<ul style="list-style-type: none">About 10-11 hours' sleep at night.2 naps during daytime of about 2-3 hours each.
About 9 months	<ul style="list-style-type: none">About 10-12 hours' sleep at night.2 naps during the daytime of about 1-2 hours each.
About 1 year	<ul style="list-style-type: none">About 10-12 hours' sleep at night.2 naps during the daytime of about 1-2 hours each.
About 2 years	<ul style="list-style-type: none">About 11-12 hours' sleep at night.1 nap during the daytime of about half an hour.
During preschool years: 3-5	<ul style="list-style-type: none">About 11-12 hours' sleep at night.A rest time during the daytime of about half an hour.
During primary school years: 5-12	<ul style="list-style-type: none">About 10-11 hours' sleep at night.
During teenage years: 12-17	<ul style="list-style-type: none">About 8-9 hours' sleep at night.

Here are some tips to prepare your child for bedtime:

- Have a regular time for going to sleep and waking up. Get to know the signs for your child that they are getting tired or overtired, Yawning, rubbing their eyes or poor eye contact.
- Have the same bedtime routine every night and read them a short bed time story to help them relax before sleep.
- Have a cool, quiet and comfortable bedroom and leave a night light on so that they don't feel upset if they wake up in the dark.
- Ensure your child has no screen time at least 1 hour before bedtime.
- Avoid very energetic activity in the hour before bedtime, children need to wind down and be calm before bed.
- Remove all electronics and screens from the bedroom such as: phones, tablets, computers and any TV.

Remember to get 7-9 hours sleep a night yourself. The more rested you are the more energy you have to take on the daily challenge of parenting.



What did you achieve today?

How you can help your child every day? Tick your daily win below.

Food and drink – Today I will...

1. Sit with my child at the breakfast table.
2. Make fruit for us all as a snack after school.
3. Give my child water or milk instead of a fizzy drink with their dinner.
4. Serve my child a child's portion of food.
5. Add more vegetables to everyone's dinner.

Physical activity – Today I will...

6. Walk some of the way to school with my child.
7. Make sure my child gets at least 1 hour of physical activity and I get 30 mins.
8. Do something fun and active with my child.

Screen time – Today we will...

9. Turn off all screens in our house at dinnertime.
10. Swap 1 hour of screen time for play or physical activity.

Sleep – Today I will...

11. Turn off all screens 1 hour before everyone's bedtime.
12. Make my child's bedroom cool, quiet and dark.

You can also share your daily win on our facebook page.
Search "make a start".



Write down your daily wins here!



Why not take a photo and share it on our facebook page?
Search "make a start".