

Here are 13 **TIPS** for **FUELING YOUNG RUNNERS** (childrensrunning.org)

Set the example - Parents need to be good role models. If they want their children to eat healthy, they need to set the example. Stuffing down a meat and potatoes meal but then telling the children to eat their veggies and fruit is not going to get the job done. Healthy eating has to be a family value; not just something for the kids, but for everyone.

Get the kids involved - Take them to the grocery store to pick out fruits, vegetables and healthy snacks. When preparing a meal, give your kids choices – this or that, but with both choices being good ones. Also try having the kids help you prepare a meal or two a week; either breakfast, lunch or dinner. What they help cook they will likely eat. And be sure the adults eat what the kids have cooked and tell them how good it tastes.

Don't use food as a reward... - Too often, when kids do something special, parents reward them with food; from a little treat on the way home to "anything goes" at the child's favorite restaurant. Experts say this sets a bad precedent, and instead encourage parents to reward children with some shared special experience, not food, and especially not unhealthy food.

...But also, not as a punishment - Although it isn't recommended that we reward kids with food, it also is a no-no to take away certain foods as punishment, including dessert. First, dessert should be a healthy part of dinner, not some over-the-top, sugarcoated, calorie-rich treat. You will spare yourself and your child a lot of anguish if fatty desserts are not on the menu.

Cut the soda pop - If you want to have an immediate impact, don't keep soda pop in the refrigerator, or even in the house or garage. Everyone knows soda pop is loaded with calories, fills a child up so they will eat less good food and offers absolutely no food value. If you want your children to be healthy, cut soda pop from their diet, or at least save it for a special pizza and soda pop night once every few weeks.

Manage your protein - Protein is an important part of every child's nutrition, but like anything else, protein can be overdone. Think small when it comes to meat portions; vary your proteins – lean meat, poultry, seafood, eggs, beans, nuts, soy; and try grilling, broiling, roasting or baking but not so much breading or frying.

Watch the sodium - Processed foods, especially cheesy foods; deli and luncheon meats; cured meats like bacon and sausage; and ready-to-eat foods like canned soups and chili, are loaded with sodium – too much sodium for good health. Also, avoid the packaged lunches that are aggressively marketed to kids today and single serving packages of chips. Though popular for kids' sack lunches, they are sky high in sodium and terribly unhealthy.

Find healthy treats - Most parents give their kids treats now and then. This is okay, provided the treats don't become a part of each day's eating pattern. At last check, the USDA still has only five major food groups and treats are not one of them. And when kids do get a treat, make it a small portion. If you have two kids, cut whatever they are having in half. Better yet, create healthy smoothies, frozen fruit, dippers or homemade trail mix. That way they get something that is both sweet and healthy.

Shopping tips - When you take the kids shopping, don't take them down the aisles with processed food. This will avoid a good many battles. Kids are attracted to color, which is why processed food marketers make their packaging so colorful. Have fun in the produce section, instead, by having your kids pick out colorful fruits and vegetables.

Limit sports drinks - For athletes who train hard for more than 60 minutes, sports drinks may have some nutritional value. For everyone else, and that includes most every child, they offer little more than extra calories, sugar and sodium to our diets. Sports drinks are a huge profit-driven industry that has targeted our children but offers little or nothing to their overall health. Kids, when running, or for that matter doing any sport, should drink water before, during and after each practice. Chocolate milk or chocolate soy milk also are good recovery drinks and are nutrient-rich.

Just eat healthy - Teaching kids to eat healthy is good, but it does not have to be pounded into them. Just prepare good tasting meals that include all the basic food groups, stay away from most processed foods and foods high in calories and sodium, and let that be enough.

Put a limit on favorite foods - Don't stop kids from eating their favorite foods, but eat them less often and in small portions. A hot dog at a picnic or a Popsicle™ or cookie while walking through the mall will not destroy all your efforts to have them eat healthy. Just limit it.

Cut excess sugar - Sarah Weir, in an Internet article titled *New Report Slams Kid's Cereals*, writes that a recent study by the Environmental Working Group shows that only one out of four breakfast cereals met the federal government's proposed guidelines for food that is nutritious enough to be marketed to children. The report claims that some cereals contain a whopping five teaspoons of sugar per serving. This is nearly two times more sugar than most children should consume in an entire day! For breakfast, cut the sugar cereals and add some protein.