

Finding Time for Your Whole Family to be Heart Healthy

Making time for a heart-healthy lifestyle can seem overwhelming. But the good news is that making a few small simple lifestyle changes can lead to heart-healthy habits that require little thought or effort.

You know your family better than anyone, so use that knowledge and get creative in how you can work heart-healthy habits into your family's life and daily schedule.

Whether you're a single parent or married, a stay-at-home parent or working, here are ways to make more time for the whole family to be more heart healthy:



1. Identify free times for activity. Keep track of each family member's daily activities for one week. You'll get a snapshot of when you might be able to get the family together for physical activity. It can also help you see which activities you can cut back on.

Pick two 30-minute and two 60-minute time slots for family activity time. Weekdays are usually better for 30-minute activities and weekends are better for 60-minute activities. Try to spread out the time slots. Here are some ideas to get your kids moving that parents can join in.

2. Make time to plan a weekly menu, go shopping and prep your meals. Keep track of how many times you grab food on the go for one week. Once you find blocks of time when you can do a little planning, it'll be easy to learn healthy preparation methods, fix healthy snacks and eat fewer fast and processed foods.

3. Simplify your family's schedule. In today's society we're expected to do it all. But this type of non-stop lifestyle isn't sustainable or healthy. Try prioritizing your activities and see what you can do without so you'll have more time for the things that matter. You can also work on stress management methods.

4. Take baby steps, not giant leaps. If you're the head of your household, making sure that all the heads and hearts in your home are healthy is a lot to handle. The key is to take baby steps. Getting heart-healthy is a journey; you don't have to do everything at once. Learn how to get heart-healthy one simple step at a time.

5. Ask everyone in the family to do their part. Depending on their ages, kids can help prepare healthy meals and help around the house. Treat your family like a team and encourage everyone to work together.

6. Live by example. We all need to do our best to walk the walk. If we want our kids to eat healthy and exercise, we've got to model that behavior. You're not perfect, but if you're determined and persistent, there's not much that can stop you.

