

START









START your kids on the way to a healthier life





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Make a **START** today

START is a campaign created by parents for parents. As parents, we all have an idea of what we should do to help our kids lead healthier lives, but everyday things often get in the way.

START is about encouraging parents to begin to make small changes that will have a positive effect on their children's health, now and in the long term. It's not about being perfect but about starting with one change and sticking with it. That gives you a small daily win. Keeping it up will be tough at times. But it's worth it as the good habits that our children learn at home will stay with them for life.



Parenting is tough. You are tougher.

One of the best ways to start a healthier life as a family is to agree to make small changes together, one daily win at a time. Reaching agreement can be tricky, but one small change can start you and your family on the way to a healthier life.

Let's do this together

Children accept changes more easily when the whole family does it together.

'We're all going to be healthier together.'

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

'During the week we are going to try more and more healthy things as a family.'

Four tips to get you started

1. Involve your children.

- Pick a good time to talk about making changes.
- Explain why you are all making these changes, as a family.
- Ask your child for ideas of what changes they could make.

2. Make one change at a time.

- Swap a sugary breakfast cereal for a wholegrain one.
- Change to drinking water or milk with meals and cutting out sugary drinks.
- After school and homework, delay turning on the TV or tablet for half an hour and encourage some physical activity instead.

Here are some helpful phrases to get you started:

'We are going to start to eat healthier foods.'

'Let's have water or milk with our meals.'

'You, Granny, Grandad, Mummy and Daddy, we're all going to eat fewer treats too.'

'Let's get moving – I want a game of tag!'



3. Stay consistent and try to stick with it.

- Decide on a plan to guide the family through the change.
- Reward the good changes.
- Limit the use of treats or screen time as rewards and not every day.
- Think about other ways to encourage your children, like hugs, kisses, encouraging words, or playing a game together.

Starting can be tough but it's worth it. Here are some simple ideas you could try:

'To wind down at the end of the day let's turn off the TV and put away phones and tablets one hour before bedtime.'

'Our snack after school is fruit, yoghurt or cheese and crackers.'

'Let's all sit at the table together to eat breakfast every morning.'

4. What you say matters when it comes to change.

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

'Well done on putting your phone away.'

'Thanks for coming on the walk with me this morning. It gave me loads of energy. How do you feel?'

'Let's try a different vegetable every other day.'

'I love chatting with you before bed.'

'Well done for trying that new vegetable. We all like different types of foods.'



START to eat healthily

Children need three regular meals a day and two or three small healthy snacks. Children copy what they see, so get the whole family eating healthily together.

To eat healthily we can make small changes to what we:

- add to the basket when shopping,
- eat at home, and
- make up school lunches.

Why not make one of these changes your daily win and add other small changes step by step?

Cut down on treat foods that are high in fat, salt and sugar, such as:

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

We know that cutting down on treats and saying no can be difficult. It takes a hero to do that – you. Try limiting treat foods to once or twice a week. If your children are hungry between meals and ask for a treat, give them healthy snacks instead.

Water or milk is best

Giving your children water or milk instead of sugary juices or fizzy drinks is a great way to reduce the amount of sugar in their diet.



Give children child-sized portions

In Northern Ireland, the Weaning Made Easy* booklet will help guide you through introducing your baby to solid food. You can find this booklet on the Public Health Agency website. By the time your baby is one, they should be able to eat most meals the rest of the family eat.

A child's appetite will vary from day to day. It depends on:

- the child's age,
- whether they are going through a growth spurt, and
- how physically active they are.

It's important to give children enough different types of food and let them decide when they are full.

- Use child-sized plates, bowls and cups.
- Use a small plate for children under five.
- Give kids smaller servings. A five-year-old needs about half the amount of food that an adult needs.

Give your children more vegetables, salads and fruit

- Fruit and veg are good for you, and you should have at least five a day. If your children can't manage five a day yet, try giving them smaller portions. Or get everyone to eat to one more serving of fruit, salad or vegetables a day to start with.



It's okay to start slowly. Try one serving a day and increase each week. Remember that fruit and veg in a recipe – like onions and tomatoes in bolognese sauce, curry or cottage pie – also count.

*Download Weaning Made Easy at:
www.publichealth.hscni.net/publications/weaning-made-easy-moving-milk-family-meals-english-and-translations

Healthy food for life

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



Breakfast

Snack

Monday

One or two cereal wheat biscuits with low-fat milk. (Add some fruit such as berries, chopped banana or raisins for variety.)

Natural yoghurt or plain fromage frais and fruit.

Tuesday

One or two oat cereal biscuits with milk. (Add some fruit such as berries, chopped banana or raisins for variety.)

Orange segments.

Wednesday

Slice of wholemeal toast with a little butter and a small glass of pure fruit juice.

A slice of brown bread and chopped banana.

Thursday

Bowl of wholegrain cereal with milk. (Add chopped banana for variety.)

Cheese and crackers.

Friday

Bowl of porridge. (Add some fruit like berries, a chopped banana or raisins for variety.)

Wholemeal toast and boiled egg.

Saturday

Slice of wholemeal toast with baked beans or scrambled egg and cherry tomatoes.

Natural yoghurt or plain fromage frais with chopped banana.

Sunday

Omelette with lots of fresh or frozen vegetables.

Chopped apple and peanut butter.



Lunch

Snack

Evening Meal

Two slices of wholemeal bread with a cheese slice and tomato.

Fresh fruit, chopped or sliced.

Shepherd's pie. Eat with sweetcorn, green beans and a glass of milk or water.

Pitta bread with ham and salad.

Two crackers and cheese.

Vegetable and bean curry with boiled rice and a glass of milk or water.

Tortilla wrap with lettuce and a slice of chicken, plus a sliced apple and peanut butter.

Unsweetened breakfast cereal with milk.

Spaghetti bolognese and a glass of milk or water.

Pasta with tuna, sweetcorn and spring onion.

Packet of plain popcorn.

Baked salmon with vegetables, pasta and a glass of milk or water.

Bread roll with tinned tuna, lettuce, peppers, tomato and a small amount of mayo.

Natural yoghurt or plain fromage frais.

Roast breast of chicken (skin removed). Eat with carrot, parsnip, broccoli and a jacket potato, and a glass of milk or water.

Lean bacon and tomato bap.

Small bowl of homemade soup.

Fish pie with frozen vegetables and a glass of milk or water.

Couscous with salad (salad vegetables and mixed beans) with cheese or tuna.

Soda bread with a little butter.

Chicken casserole with lots of vegetables, a boiled potato and a glass of milk or water.



Pause for Play

Getting more active as a family

Being more active as a family doesn't have to mean organised sports or training. It can be as simple as a game of tag or having a dance around the room. Anything that gets the family moving about and having fun counts.

Children over five

If you have children over five, encourage them to play and be active for at least an hour a day, every day of the week. You can break that into shorter periods during the day. And join in when you can to spend more quality time being active together.

Children under five

Being active for three hours a day, broken up into small blocks of time, is super to help little ones get lots of movement into their day. Joining in when you can means you can make some great memories together too.

Play counts as activity

Children are naturally active, so all playful activity adds towards their 60 minutes a day. Playing games that get them up and moving about will start them on their way to a much healthier life.

Encourage active games

Introducing the family to lots of active games is a great way to help you and your children enjoy being more active. Why not show them a game you played when you were their age? Or get them to teach you one of theirs? Encourage them to try different activities. When you're playing, praise everyone involved. Do plenty of practice to increase your children's confidence and build their skills.

Tips for getting more active:

- Gradually build an extra 10 to 15 minutes of active play or being active into your family's daily routine.
- Combine different types of activities and games every day to keep it interesting and fun.
- For more information on walking and cycling safety go to the website at: www.nidirect.gov.uk/articles/cycling-safety

What's active play?

This includes anything that gets us moving, like:

- playing in the playground
- hopscotch
- riding a scooter
- hide-and-peek
- dancing to music
- cycling
- chasing
- skipping
- jumping in puddles, and
- skating.

Active treats

Take the family on an outdoor trip to somewhere local and new. To find out what's happening near you, search 'Getting active' on the website at www.choosetolivebetter.com

Active travel

When you can, try to make the time to walk, cycle or scoot with your children on the way to and from school. This will mean you all spend less time sitting down. Try getting off the bus a few stops early or taking the car part of the way and walking the rest of the way. It all adds up to being more active and it's a great time for everyone to catch up and share their news.



Organised activities and sports

Some children love sports. Some need a lot of encouragement to try something, but once they try it they often end up loving it. For others, sports may still be something they end up hating. Don't worry – keep trying lots of different activities until you find what works. Here are a few suggestions:

- Football
- GAA games (hurling, camogie and Gaelic football)
- Rugby
- Karate
- Dance
- Basketball
- Tennis
- Boxing
- Community games



Let's enjoy being active and have some fun.

- Include a variety of activities so that being active does not become a chore and you get to have new experiences.
- Join in and be active with your children – so everyone gets more activity into their day.
- You can find more information on fun places to visit and local activities to do together that won't cost a fortune at www.choosetolivebetter.com. There are lots of free activities to check out, so get planning your next day out!

Younger children

- New-borns and babies need lots of daily tummy-time and floor-based play. Short daily sessions are best. This kind of play will help them become strong and learn to roll, sit and crawl and bring lots of smiles to mum's and dad's faces.
- Avoid keeping babies and young children in car-seats or high-chairs for long periods.
- When babies are awake, try not to have them sitting for longer than one hour at a time.



Get up and about

Here are some examples of activities that the whole family can do together and will benefit everyone:

Type of activity

Examples

Fairly active

- Cycling • Brisk walking • Swimming • Skateboarding
- Riding a scooter • Rollerblading • Hiking • Dancing
- Games involving throwing and catching

Very active

Active games involving running and chasing, like:

- Tag • Running • Cycling fast
- Jumping rope • Dancing like no one is watching!

Highly active sport also includes:

- Hurling or Camogie • Football • Rugby • Basketball
- Swimming • Tennis

Good for muscles

Games that are good for muscles include:

- Tug-of-war • Rope climbing • Swinging or climbing on playground equipment or bars • Climbing walls
- Martial arts like karate

Good for bones

Games that are good for bones include:

- Hopscotch • Hopping • Jumping • Running

Sports that are good for bones include:

- Gymnastics • Basketball • Tennis • Skipping • Volleyball



START spending more quality time together

Screens – TVs, mobile phones, tablets, video games and so on have become a big part of family life. They can be tough to get away from and it's easy for families to fall into an evening routine of TV and screen time. But it's important to have screen-free quality time together.

Limit screen time

Swapping some screen-time every day for family activities will help improve kids' moods and overall health. Also, try having screen-free meals and spend this quality time chatting.

Limit screen time for babies

For children under 18 months, the advice is to avoid the use of screens, except for video calls when necessary.

Children aged two to five

Got children between two and five? Make a plan together to stick to a maximum of one hour a day of TV or screen-based programmes. It can help them learn and apply it to the world around them, but plan to have no more than one hour of screen time a day.

Children aged six and over

For children aged six and over, set clear time limits. Encourage them to put down the screens and get more active. This goes for Mum, Dad, Granny and Grandad too! It will have a positive effect on the whole family's sleep and appetite.

Sleeping and being active are important – make them a priority

Make sure screen-time doesn't replace sleep or being active. Also try not to have the tablet or TV on if nobody is watching them.

Screen-free areas

Have some screen-free areas in your home, such as in bedrooms.

Keep meals screen-free

Screens are part of our daily lives but they can also affect our appetite. Try banning screens at mealtimes so you can enjoy your food in each other's company.

Lead by example

It's important for you to limit your own screen-time too. You could use the following to start a conversation about limiting screen time:

'We all like watching our films and our shows but we watch them for too long.'

'Let's all start to cut down on watching TV and tablets by 30 minutes a day and do something fun and active together.'

'All of us can give it a go, including me.'

At times it can be difficult to get the kids away from screens. It's a daily battle, but it could be your daily win. Head outside to kick a ball when the weather is nice. When it's not, play a game together indoors or get the kids to help you prepare dinner.

START to sleep well

Is your child getting enough sleep?

Some kids are better sleepers than others, but they all need lots of shut-eye to help them grow and learn. All children need a good balance of sleep, rest and activity, and active kids sleep better.

Here's a guide on how much sleep children need

| Your child's age: | Your child's needs: |
|--------------------------|--|
| Six months | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• About 10 to 11 hours' sleep at night.• Two naps during the day, of about two to three hours each. |
| Nine months | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• About 10 to 12 hours' sleep at night.• Two naps during the day, of up to two hours each. |
| One | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• About 10 to 12 hours' sleep at night.• Two naps during the day, of up to two hours each. |
| Two | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• About 11 to 12 hours' sleep at night.• One nap of about 30 minutes during the day. |
| Three to five | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• About 11 to 12 hours' sleep at night.• A rest time of about 30 minutes during the day. |
| Six to 12 | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• About 10 to 11 hours' sleep at night. |
| 13 to 17 | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• About eight to nine hours' sleep at night. |



Tips to prepare your child for sleep:

- Have a regular time for them going to sleep and waking up. Get to know the signs that they are getting tired, such as yawning, rubbing their eyes or making poor eye contact.
- It's best for them to try and have the same bedtime routine every night. Read them a short bedtime story to help them relax and unwind.
- Children need different amounts of sleep. If you notice that they can't get out of bed in the morning or are moody during the day, try an earlier bedtime.
- Set up their bedroom the right way. Do they like it warm or cool? Do they prefer it dark or bright? If you know they don't like a dark room, leave a night light on so they don't get upset if they wake up in the dark. Make their room a quiet and comfortable space to drift off.
- Agree with them that there is no screen time in the hour before bedtime.
- Avoid very energetic activities in the hour before bedtime so the whole family can wind down before bed.
- Make bedrooms screen-free zones. This includes phones, tablets, computers and TVs.

Wind-down routines aren't just for kids, they're for parents too. We all need to relax away from screens before bed so we can get the seven to nine hours' sleep we need, to tackle the day ahead.

What will you START today?

Choose your daily win below.

Food and drink – today I will...

1. Sit with my family at the breakfast table.
2. Prepare fruit for us all to have as a snack after school.
3. Give my family water or milk instead of a fizzy drink with our evening meal.
4. Give the kids child-sized portions of food.
5. Add more vegetables to everyone's dinner.

Physical activity – today I will...

6. Walk some of the way to and from school with the kids.
7. Encourage the kids to be active for at least an hour a day, with me joining in for 30 minutes.
8. Do something fun and active with the family.

Screen-time – today I will...

9. Ban screen at the dinner table so we can chat.
10. Swap one hour of screen-time for being active.

Sleep – today I will...

11. Agree as a family that there is no screen-time in the hour before bed.
12. Set up the kids' bedrooms the way they like them.



Write down your daily wins here!

A series of horizontal dotted lines for writing down daily wins.

You can also share your daily win on our Facebook group
www.facebook.com/safefood.net (Search 'make a start!')





Make a start 



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