

HEALTH

Young students: My body is strong, my brain is sharp and I feel good!

Older students/teens/adults: Wellbeing in body, mind and spirit.

Dear Dr. Robyn,

I don't know if you can answer this but I thought I'd give it a shot. I work part time and when my kids get home from school, we've got homework, activities and they want to play with me. I want to keep them healthy but it's hard to find time to cook! Any advice on keeping kids healthy when limited on time?

-- Jennifer D, Tampa, FL

Dear Donna,

Your question speaks to a lot of families these days. There is so much to do, and not much time! Yes; I do have some advice on this topic. Aside from creating Powerful Words, authoring books and speaking to audiences, I'm also a mother. So on this question, I come from the professional and personal perspective.

(1) Prepare meals in advance: I often prepare the bulk of a healthy meal at night when the kids are sleeping. For example, when I'm making a healthy vegetable quiche, I prepare my vegetables, grate my cheese and mix the egg filling in the evening. Then, the next day, I only need to put everything together and bake it while I'm with the children.

(2) Make food that you don't have to baby sit: Aside from preparing some key ingredients in advance, I also love meals that can be put in the oven (i.e. baked chicken, veggie lasagne *with*

lean proteins) sit on the stove top (*turkey-veggie chili, soups*) or cook in the slow cooker without my constant watchful eye. That way, I know a healthy meal is being prepared but my focus can still be on what needs to get done.

(3) Get the children involved: My children both are interested in cooking and baking. Are yours? It's a great way to get an extra lesson in on math and nutrition while keeping them engaged. An added benefit? When they cook with you, they are more likely to want to eat what you make!

(4) Make food fun: Children love color. Ask your children to help choose a rainbow of foods to make a meal and play a game with them at meal time-- who can eat the most colors on their plate? Of course, make sure the colors come from natural foods.

(5) Cut vegetables when hungry: When children are hungry before meals, cut vegetables and leave them on the counter top. You'll be

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<< Paraphrased from a message; with permission

surprised to see them disappear!

(6) Swap! Offer to do a swap with another parent. One of you can cook a meal for both families and the other can take the kids after school. Swap on different days!

Cooking in a healthy way can be integrated into our lives. And on days when it's too much? Give yourself a break. You are still a great parent!

Here's to your success!

