

News Notes To Parents

Purdue University Cooperative Extension Service

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8 Parenting Goals to Start the New Year Strong.

New Year's resolutions are often sweeping and grand. But you can often reap the biggest rewards by building off strengths already in place. Helping to make your family safer, stronger and more harmonious in the coming year may not require a complete overhaul, but rather a few strategic tweaks.

The start of a new year is a great time to take a step back, take a breath and look at how you are taking care of yourself and others in your family. Consider these suggestions for a healthy new year.

1. Get everyone up-to-date on recommended immunizations

Vaccines are the best way to protect yourself, your children, and other loved ones from dangerous viruses such as RSV, flu and COVID, which have been rising among children. Call your pediatrician to make sure your children are up-to-date on all recommended immunizations. Also, remind your kids that good hand hygiene habits will help prevent the spread of germs.

2. Build healthy digital habits

What are your kids watching on TV and online? Devote some time to researching age-appropriate media. Make a family media use plan, and try to prevent gaming from becoming an unhealthy habit.

3. Read together

Set aside some time for shared reading each day. For younger kids, an easy way is to build it into your child's bedtime routine. For older children and teens, share a favorite book by taking turns reading aloud or listen to audiobooks together.

4. Get outside more

Spending time outdoors can be a great mood booster. It also helps families get needed physical activity and vitamin D while enjoying time in nature.

5. Check your car seat limits for safety

Kids grow so fast and can easily outgrow car seats faster than parents realize. Keep kids riding rear-facing as long as possible, up to the limits of their car seat, because this is the safest mode. This commonly includes children under 2 and most children up to age 4.

6. Set aside time to cook together & share family meals

Many families enjoy baking treats together during the holidays. Schedule special times to cook together as a family. Research finds that kids who eat with their families at least 3 times a week enjoy physical, emotional, social and academic benefits.

7. Make a family disaster kit

It's scary to think how disasters like wildfires, hurricanes or tornados could affect our communities. But extreme weather events are becoming more frequent due to climate change. Ask your children what they would want with them in a disaster and assemble basic supplies.

8. Mind mental health & practice self-care

When was the last time you had a check-up? Got proper rest? Once a baby is no longer a part of your body, it's easy to forget that how you care for yourself affects how well you can care for your child. The National Maternal Mental Health Hotline is available 24/7 by calling 1-833-943-5746. And for non-emergency support, you can contact Postpartum Support International: call or text "Help" to 1-800-944-4773.



Source: adapted from [healthychildren.org](https://www.healthychildren.org)
American Academy of Pediatrics

Photo credit: Canva



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Eating better on a budget

Get the most for your budget! The three main steps are planning before you shop, purchasing the items at the best price, and preparing meals that stretch your food dollars.

1 Plan, plan, plan!

Before you head to the grocery store, plan your meals for the week. Check to see what foods you already have and make a list for what you need to buy.



2 Get the best price

Check the local newspaper, online, and at the store for sales and coupons. Look for specials or sales on meat and seafood—often the most expensive items on your list.

3 Compare and contrast

Locate the "Unit Price" on the shelf directly below the product. Use it to compare different brands and different sizes of the same brand to determine which is the best buy.

4 Buy in bulk

It is almost always cheaper to buy foods in bulk. Before you shop, remember to check if you have enough freezer space.



5 Buy in season

Buying fruits and vegetables in season can lower the cost and add to the freshness! If you are not going to use them all right away, buy some that still need time to ripen.

6 Convenience costs... go back to the basics

Convenience foods like frozen dinners, pre-cut fruits and vegetables, and take-out meals can often cost more than if you were to make them at home. Take the time to prepare your own—and save!

7 Easy on your wallet

Certain foods are typically low-cost options all year round.

8 Cook once...eat all week!

Prepare a large batch of favorite recipes on your day off (double or triple the recipe). Freeze in individual containers.



9 Get creative with leftovers

Spice up your leftovers—use them in new ways. For example, try leftover chicken in a stir-fry, over a garden salad, or in chili. Remember, throwing away food is throwing away your money!

10 Eating out

Restaurants can be expensive. Save money by getting the early bird special, going out for lunch instead of dinner, or looking for "2 for 1" deals. Ask for water instead of ordering other beverages, which add to the bill.

Center for Nutrition Policy and Promotion
USDA is an equal opportunity provider, employer, and lender.

Go to ChooseMyPlate.gov
for more information.

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