

big PLANS in print

Connecting Big Plans' Parents to their Communities

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7 HABITS OF HEALTHY KIDS

Parents are constantly inundated with information on how to raise happy, healthy kids and sometimes it can seem like a complicated formula. Look around online and you'll find millions of articles, books, and blog posts tackling every parenting issue from sleep to potty training to nutrition and more.

Today, we wanted to take a closer look at some simple things healthy kids and families have in common. These 7 habits are some of the most important when it comes to supporting healthy development.

1. Healthy kids have parents who are healthy eaters.

One of the strongest predictors of the quality of a child's diet is his or her parents' diet. Studies show that when mom and dad are eating lots of fruits and veggies, kids end up eating more of them too. Making sure that healthy foods are part of our diet not only helps ensure that these foods are readily available to our kids, but also provides them with a model of how to eat a healthy, balance diet. Studies also show that this type of passive modelling is more effective than strictly controlling or restricting children's diets. For children who exhibit extreme picky eating behaviors; however, this modelling approach may not be enough. Visit our website for our best tips for addressing picky eating in kids (<https://theinspiredtreehouse.com/15-tips-for-picky-eaters>)

2. Healthy kids take risks.

As parents, we worry about our kids. It's our job. But even though our instincts tell us to swoop in and save the day, studies show that risk-taking can be extremely beneficial to our kids' health. Allowing our kids to engage in risky play can lead to increased physical activity, increased social competence and well-being, and enhanced creativity and resilience. Here are some great tips for letting go a little and allowing kids to get out there, explore, and take risks on their own (<http://www.balancedandbarefoot.com/blog/explore-more-worry-less-our-kids-depend-on-it!>)

3. Healthy kids engage in unsupervised, unstructured play.

Not only is it great for our kids when we back off a little and let them take risks, it's also really important to allow kids to engage in lots of free, unstructured play. This means ensuring that their days aren't so full of scheduled lessons, classes, and practices that there's no time for good old-fashioned play! Research has found that the more time children spend in unsupervised,

Cover story continued next page ...



This Issue:

7 Habits of Healthy Kids Page 1

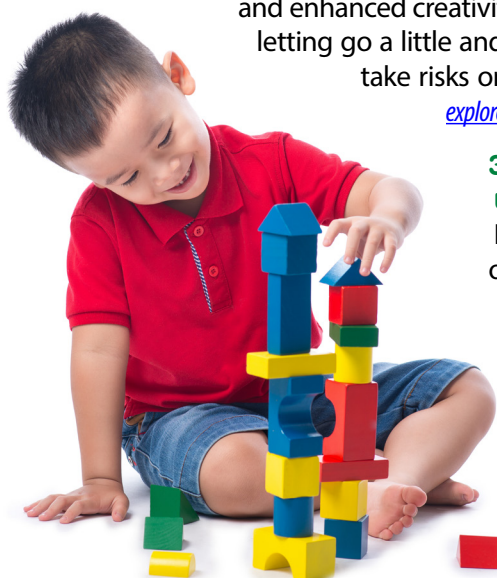
National Child Day..... Page 2

PACT Program..... Page 3

Playdough Recipe Page 3

Growing & Grazing in the Early Years
..... Page 4

Banana Pumpkin Muffins..... Page 4



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unstructured activities, the better they score on executive functioning measures. Many other health benefits are derived from free, unstructured play, including brain development, social skill development, creativity, leadership skills, stress reduction, and more. We've got lots of great tips for parents and caregivers who know the value of free play on our website. (<https://theinspiredtreehouse.com/happy-healthy-kids-free-play-toolkit>)

4. Healthy kids move their bodies...a lot.

In fact, studies find that the more they move, the more health benefits kids get and more vigorous and active play seems to provide the greatest benefits. It's hard to sum up all of the amazing health benefits kids get from active play, but just to name a few... physical activity is correlated with musculoskeletal health, cardiovascular health, healthy blood pressure and body fat, decreased anxiety and depression, and increased self-concept and academic performance. Not to mention the amazing sensory benefits of movement!

Just how much physical activity do they need? The experts say at least 60 minutes of moderate to vigorous activity should do the trick for most kids... but remember this is a minimum! Adding more than 60 minutes of active play to your daily routine is an added bonus!

Need ideas for active play? Look no further! We feature tons of great movement activities here at The Inspired Treehouse (<https://theinspiredtreehouse.com>). Visit our website to see a few of our favorites: 20 Backyard Games for Kids, Line tag, Creative Indoor Recess Games, Teaching Your Child How to Jump Rope, Firecracker Tag, and 5 Fun Pool Games for Kids.

5. Healthy kids explore using all of their senses.

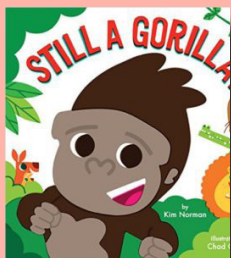
In addition to movement, exploration using the other senses (hearing, vision, smell, taste, and touch) is extremely important when it comes to healthy development.

Kids learn about the world around them and assign meaning to their surroundings using their senses. Sensory processing is also closely tied to motor development, language development, cognitive development, and more.

Sensory exploration through play is so important for kids. And we're not just talking about getting your hands messy. Kids need exposure to all kinds of movement, sounds, smells, tastes, and sights in their play for healthy development.

Did you know November 20th is National Child Day in Canada?

This is in recognition of our country's commitment to upholding the rights of children. It marks two historic events: the 1959 United Nations Declaration on the Rights of the Child, and the ratification of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) in 1989. In 1999, the UNCRC was endorsed by Alberta.



READ A STORY ON CHILDREN'S RIGHTS

Still a Gorilla

By Kim Norman

A funny, wacky, rhyming picture book that teaches the importance of being yourself. (Preschool Audience). Visit calgarylibrary.ca for more information.

www.nationalchildday.ca

6. Healthy kids get lots of sleep.

No doubt about it, sleep is one of the most important underlying factors for physical development, attention, behavior, immunity, learning, memory, and more!

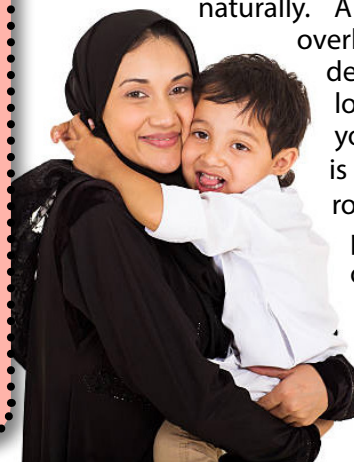
Many children have difficulty falling asleep and staying asleep through the night. Studies find that the more active kids are (see point number 4 in this article), the faster they fall asleep and the longer they sleep at night. Research also points to the importance of establishing a regular bedtime routine and, for some kids, using sensory strategies can help them calm down at bedtime.

7. Healthy kids get lots of hugs.

It's no secret that loving touch is one of the most important things you can give your kids from the moment they are born. Human touch, via hugs, pats on the back, playful wrestling, and loving strokes plays a large role in children's sensory development. Research has shown the importance of touch in developing a healthy sense of proprioception and body awareness.

But beyond physical development, touch can also help calm anxiety in certain groups and is seen as an essential element of the human experience, conveying deep emotional meaning between the person doing the touching and the person who is being touched.

Most often, loving touch between parents and their children comes naturally. A fun and often-overlooked way to deliver some playful loving touch to your little ones is roughhousing or rough and tumble play. But a good old-fashioned hug works too!



*Reprinted with permission -
<https://theinspiredtreehouse.com/7-habits-of-healthy-kids>*

PACT



Supporting, Encouraging and Informing Calgary Families

Often called “one of Calgary’s best kept secrets”, the Parents and Children Together (PACT) Program is one that all parents should be made aware of. Not only has PACT been running in various locations throughout Calgary for over thirty-five years*, but for 16 years it was voted Best Program in the Calgary’s Child Magazine Parents’ Choice Awards!

PACT is a unique program that offers Calgary families:

- *One program for you and all your children, aged 0-5, to attend together.*
- *The opportunity to socialize and connect with parents and children in surrounding communities.*
- *Thought-provoking discussion groups for parents focused on developing resiliency and respectful parenting practices. (Topics fall under the categories of: Child Development and Growth; Play; Parenting Styles; Discipline; Self-Esteem; and Effective Communication and are selected by the participants each session.)*
- *A stimulating child-directed play environment that supports your child’s development through activities such as play dough, painting, crafts, floor toys, dress-up, books, puzzles, building blocks and more!*
- *Opportunities to work on building confidence, curiosity, intentionality, self-control, relatedness, communication skills, and cooperativeness in your preschoolers - readiness skills for school and life!*
- *Encouragement, support, and a safe place to grow and develop.*
- *An opportunity to enjoy song and story time together each morning.*

As the population of Calgary continues to grow, so does the number of challenges facing our families. More than ever, effective parenting plays a critical role in the healthy development of our future generations. PACT knows that in order to excel, families with young children need support, encouragement and information.

With this in mind, parents enrolled in PACT will participate in two program components, the parent education/discussion group and the children’s program. While half the parents meet in the discussion groups, the children are involved in a child-directed play program supervised by a qualified children’s play coordinator and other parents. The sociodramatic play encourages brain growth in toddlers and preschoolers through child-directed make-believe (roles, objects, and events) which helps to develop language skills, allows for expression of feelings, and provides opportunities for social interaction.

The PACT parent educators, leading the parent discussion groups, are some of the best in Calgary. They offer information, support, and encouragement to parents on a variety of topics such as: *Ages and Stages of Development and Growth; Observation Skills and Play; Parenting Styles; Effective, Respectful Discipline; Fostering Self-Esteem; and Family Communication.*

In the children’s program, PACT supports the ‘true toy’ revival. At each location toys include such items as play dough, floor toys, dress-up clothes, books, puzzles, building blocks, toy kitchens and house centres, and other toys that require some imagination and make-believe to use. The play-time also gives parents a chance to observe their preschooler(s) at play and begin to test the skills learned in the parent discussion group. The two parent groups alternate weeks, spending one with the children and one with the adults in the discussion group.

Programs operate in two locations across the city of Calgary (see sidebar). There are three sessions that are each ten weeks in length. While registration ahead of time is encouraged, PACT allows for ongoing open enrollment as well as drop-in opportunities. All programs operate from 9:15-11:15am, include snacks (provided by parent volunteers).

* Years in operation - over sixteen years as PACT and before that as Observation Nurseries of Calgary



World’s Best Playdough Recipe

INGREDIENTS:

- 1 cup white flour
- 1/4 cup of salt
- 2 tsp. cream of tartar
- 1 cup water
- 1 tbsp. oil
- 2 tsp. food colouring

Mix flour, salt, and cream of tartar in a medium pot. Add water, oil and food colouring. Cook and stir over medium heat. When mixture forms a ball in the pot, turn out and knead on a slightly floured surface. Store in airtight container or plastic bag. For variety, add Kool-Aid powder to dry ingredients instead of food colouring. It will smell great!

Recipe courtesy of PACT website.

2018 PACT Locations

Fall, Winter & Spring Sessions (session length is 10 weeks)

Tuesdays 9:15-11:15am:

- *Scenic Acres - Advent Lutheran Church - 11 Scenic Acres Gate NW*

Thursdays 9:15-11:15am:

- *Southwood - Southwood United Church - 10690 Elbow Drive SW*

How can I get in contact to find out more or to register?

Contact PACT today to enroll at the location/day of your choice. Registration is ongoing, provided the program times/locations that you are interested in do not fill to capacity.

The fee is \$190.00 PER FAMILY for a 10 week session after August 1st. If you would like to join a session that has already started we are happy to pro-rate the fee accordingly.

For more information about the program or fees, or to get a registration form sent to you, call (403) 671-1710 or email P_A_C_T@hotmail.com.

www.pactcalgary.com



Growing + Grazing in the Early Years

How to help young children establish healthy eating habits!

Written by: Hayley Gulayets, BSc., RD

In a world full of mixed information about what kids should eat and how to feed your child it can be tough to navigate what is best for your family.

Do you find yourself asking...

- What are the best foods for my young child?
- What should I do if my child is a picky eater?
- Is my child eating enough, or maybe too much?

You are not alone, these are common questions that come up in the early years. Let's take a few minutes to discuss how you can take the struggles out of eating and make sure your children are getting enough nutrition to grow in the body that's right for them.

The goal around feeding in the early years is to help children develop a healthy relationship with food. In order to do this, parents and caregivers have the opportunity to play a role in creating a positive experience for their kids. Likewise, children also have a role to play in the process. These roles are defined through the [Division of Responsibility in Feeding \(DOR\)](#) and after

years of research we have learned that it really does work! (Check out the [Ellyn Satter Institute](#) for more information)

So how do these roles work? Let's take a quick look:

Parent responsibilities:

- **What**
- **When**
- **Where**

Child responsibilities:

- **If**
- **How much**

Now let's see how that looks day-to-day:

As parents you have the role of choosing **what** foods to offer. This includes healthy well-balanced meals and snacks for the whole family. *Think: mixture of fruits, vegetables, grain products, calcium-rich foods and protein-rich foods daily.*

Parents decide **when** to offer those foods. *Plan: scheduling meals and snacks 2-3 hours apart, encouraging children to listen to how hungry and full their bellies are.*

Lastly you pick **where** you and your family eat. *Enjoy: sitting down as a family and*

eating together where there are no distractions – this means turning off the TV and putting away mobile devices and toys.

The rest is up to your child. They will choose **if** and **how much** they would like to eat of the foods you have offered. At the end of the day, parents will need to trust their children to listen to their own bodies – respecting them if they say, "I'm full" or offering more if they are still hungry.

Following the DOR method can be a mindset shift for many families, and the best part is that we know it works! There is no need to pressure your child to eat, be patient and trust that everyone has a role. Just remember: the long-term goal is for your child to develop a healthy relationship with food while growing and thriving.

For more information or to book with a Registered Pediatric Dietitian [visit us online](#), we would be happy to help your family with any mealtime struggles or nutrition concerns.

Hayley Gulayets is a registered dietitian with Calgary Family Nutrition specializing in infant, child and youth nutrition. www.calgaryfamilynutrition.com



Banana Pumpkin Muffins

Need a great snack idea? The banana and pumpkin helps keep these muffins moist. A perfect morning snack for your kids with fruit or add peanut butter for a post-activity snack! Makes 24 muffins. Prep Time: 10 minutes. Cook Time: 20 minutes.

Ingredients

- 4 Eggs
- 2 Bananas, very ripe, mashed
- ½ cup Canned Pumpkin (not pumpkin pie filling!)
- ½ cup Plain Greek yogurt (at least 2%)
- ½ cup Brown Sugar
- 2 tsp. Vanilla Extract
- 1 Tbsp. Ground Cinnamon
- ½ tsp. Ground Nutmeg
- 2 tsp. Baking Soda
- ½ tsp. Salt
- 1 cup Whole Wheat Flour
- 1 ½ cups All purpose Flour
- ¾ cup Mini Chocolate Chips

Instructions

1. Preheat oven to 350 degrees F. Grease muffin tins or line with muffin liners.
2. In a large bowl (or blender) mix eggs for 10 seconds.
3. Add bananas, pumpkin, yogurt, brown sugar, vanilla extract, cinnamon, nutmeg, baking soda and salt. Mix until blended.
4. Stir in flour just until all flour is mixed - Do not over-mix here.
5. Fold in chocolate chips.
6. Pour batter into muffin tins - filling 2/3 full.
7. Bake for 20-25 minutes. They are cooked when you insert a toothpick into the center and there is no batter is on it when you remove it.
8. Cool completely before storing. Can be stored in a fridge for 1 week or in the freezer for up to 3 months.