



Let's Talk About...

...Raising Healthy Children

It's never too early to start talking to children about important issues. Establishing good communication with your children when they are young will help them be more comfortable talking about difficult topics later.

Ask for their opinions and listen to what they say. Share what is important to you and have ongoing discussions about honesty, self-reliance, responsibility, qualities that make a good friend, and how good values make good decision making easier. When talking about complex topics, use examples and teachable moments. Teachable moments are times when children have just begun to think about issues and have questions. For example, if a relative who smokes gets short of breath on the stairs and a child asks why, that would be a good time to talk about the effects of smoking.

Create a healthy environment at home. The more kids see others choose healthy behaviors — such as good nutrition and not smoking — the more they seem “normal.” You can set a good example by what you do and say.

Encourage your children to be active at home and play. Help your children try new things and pursue activities they like. Always praise their efforts. Give them roles and responsibilities and ask them questions that make them think, such as “Why is playing ball good for you?” or “Which is better for your body - an apple or a donut?”

Whatever we do and say, kids will have many opportunities to make important decisions. We can't always be there to help them make the right choice. By being a positive role model and giving them good information, skills, confidence and support, you will be providing tools that will encourage them to make healthy choices.



... Answering Difficult Questions

Between ages 2 and 5, children start asking questions parents will want to be prepared to answer. Questions may include topics like tobacco, drugs, sexuality and death. How you respond will set the stage for whether your child will be comfortable asking you questions later. Here are some tips:

- ✓ Respond in a welcoming manner.
- ✓ Be prepared to give accurate, straightforward information.
- ✓ Be concrete and direct.
- ✓ Be honest. Use correct terminology when talking about body parts.
- ✓ Provide the answer that takes care of the main question. For this young age group, a simple answer most often satisfies the child. If you do not know the answer, say so. Then find the answer and be sure to follow up.
- ✓ When information is personal, say “Please keep this information private because it's about ... (private parts, private information about our family, etc.)”.

...Are You a Healthy Role Model?

Do you...

- Eat healthy meals and snacks?
- Always wash your hands?
- Play active games?
- Avoid places where smoking is permitted?
- Buckle up?
- Wear a helmet when skating or riding a bike, scooter or skateboard?



Let's Talk About...

... Is There a Smoker In The House?

Parents who smoke have a greater chance of raising kids who smoke. Here are some tips to help you:

- X Never smoke around your child.
- X Let your child know you wish you'd never started.
- X Describe the physical effects and costs of smoking.
- X Make an effort to quit.
- X Help your child avoid other people's smoke.
- X Encourage your child to take part in activities where smoking is discouraged.
- X Don't make smoking seem glamorous with fancy lighters or pretty boxes for cigarettes.
- X Don't collect smoking promotional items.

90%
adult smokers
who started
smoking before
age 19

440,000
U.S. deaths
each year from
smoking-related
diseases

23%
Anne Arundel
County high
school seniors
who smoke

**30,000-
60,000**
U.S. deaths each
year caused
by secondhand
smoke

12
average age
when Maryland
youth smoke
their first
cigarette

... Keeping a Healthy Snack Pantry and Fridge

Provide healthy snacks for your family. Compare labels of prepared foods and choose products with the least amount of added sugar and unhealthy fat and with more fiber and vitamins.

Healthy Snack Grocery List:

- Whole-grain crackers
- Whole-grain cereal
- Dried fruit (raisins, apples and apricots)
- Fat-free pudding
- Sugar-free gelatin
- Fresh fruit and veggies (carrots, kiwi and broccoli)
- Low-fat yogurt
- Low-fat string cheese
- Almonds, peanuts or walnuts
- Soy nuts

... Picky Eaters



Research shows parents should focus less on "picky eating" and more on modeling fruit and vegetable consumption for their children. When new foods are frequently introduced or tasting opportunities are provided, children are more willing to try new foods. However, children may have to try a new food eight to fifteen times before they accept it.

Web Site Resources

- Anne Arundel County Department of Health, www.ahealth.org
- Nemours Foundation, www.kidshealth.org
- Campaign for Tobacco-Free Kids, www.tobaccofreekids.org
- Body and Mind (BAM), www.bam.gov.

Learn To Live

Healthy Living From The Anne Arundel County Department Of Health
www.ahealth.org

410-222-7979