



Nurturing Healthy Children Through Family Wellness

There are lots of different things that impact our children's health. But perhaps the most important factor is the overall wellness of our families. To provide the best environment for our children, we need to make sure that our family unit is as healthy as possible.

Family wellness is determined not only by our physical health (*through nutrition, doctors' visits, exercise, etc.*), but also by our emotional health, the relationships we enjoy, and our connection to our community.

This pamphlet shares a few thoughts about how we all can improve our family wellness. And through **2-1-1 Child Development Infoline** there is more information available for you and your family on many different subjects.

The Importance of a Healthy Start from Day One

The early months and years are so important in a child's development. Every parent needs all the support he or she can get during this period to raise healthy and happy children and give them the best chance of lifelong success.

But knowing where to turn for support is often not so easy. That is why local and state partners have joined together to help you access the information and services every parent needs.

2-1-1 Child Development Infoline
Call 2-1-1 or 1-800-505-7000
Visit cdi.211ct.org/healthyfromdayone



Organizations supporting Healthy from Day One

Department of Children and Families

Department of Public Health (DPH)

Clifford Beers Clinic

Yale School of Medicine

Wheeler Clinic

Early Childhood Consultation Partnership,

Advanced Behavioral Health Inc.

New Haven Public Schools

United Way of CT

New Haven MOMS Partnership

CT Association for Infant Mental Health

FAVOR, Inc.



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You're there for them.
We're here for you.

**Promoting Family Wellness
in Our Community.**

The Four Pillars of Family Wellness



PHYSICAL HEALTH

Exercise

We all know exercise is really important. Exercise not only makes us healthier, but it also helps us sleep, reduces stress, and makes us happier. A great way to exercise is to play with our kids. Frisbee, tag, hide and seek, or just take a fun walk together. Target 20 minutes a day.

Nutrition

In our lifetime we eat about 70,000 meals and about 60 tons of food! And while that's a lot of food, many of us are undernourished in key nutrients. For the whole picture, the **2-1-1 Child Development Infoline** website has information about nutritional guidelines and how to eat healthier even on a tight budget. One great way to start is to substitute fruit for one sugary treat each day – it is a simple way to start.

Dental Care

Dental care is the most common unmet healthcare need in US children. And that's not good, because poor oral health can cause lots of other problems. The good news is that routine cleanings and checkups are covered by most insurance, including Medicaid. As a game at home, brush your teeth at the same time as your child and see who can brush for at least 60 seconds.

EMOTIONAL HEALTH

The way we think and feel about ourselves and the world around us affects how we interact with others, including our children. As our emotional health improves, we tend to feel better about ourselves, and better prepared to manage work, home-life, responsibilities, and relationships.

Managing Stress

Managing stress is an important first step toward better emotional health. When we are tense, our breathing becomes quick and shallow, our blood pressure goes up, and we tend to over-react to even normal, everyday situations. A few slow, deep breaths can work wonders.

Strengthening Spirituality

Whether we are connected to a specific religion or not, we all can benefit from finding meaning and purpose to our lives. Relaxation and some quiet time can be really helpful. Even just thinking about what role love and peace play in our lives can help us gain important balance.

Setting Healthy Behavior Goals

Whether it is to eat better or manage our anger or stop some addictive behavior, we all have things in our lives we want to improve. Step one is to identify what we want to work on. Step two is to recognize that we have the power to take control of our actions and reactions. And step three is to start small. Behavior change is tough work. Set a goal you can achieve and feel good about it.



HEALTHY RELATIONSHIPS

The importance of healthy relationships starts at day one. From birth to age four, a child's brain forms as many as one million new connections every second! How they form and the health of your child is directly impacted by the quality of human relationships during those early years.

Parents, caregivers, and teachers can take advantage of this important period of growth by providing children with nurturing and positive relationships. It's important to be responsive and predictable in our words, gestures, and actions. Our actions, words, and tone need to communicate:

- "I love you and am here to keep you safe."*
- "I will be here for you when you need me."*
- "I enjoy being with you and taking care of you."*
- "You'll know what to expect from me in calm times and in stressful times."*

COMMUNITY SUPPORTS

Community supports and connections play a key role in family wellness. Meaningful daily activities, such as: a job, school, volunteering, family caretaking, engaging your neighbors, and taking advantage of community spaces are all ways that we can promote our family's wellness.

Here are a few ideas for developing community connections. Start talking to neighbors you see regularly, form a walking group, start a support group, help out with a local sports team, attend community meetings, get to know the clerks at local stores, and play games with friends and neighbors.



Our communities also offer many public spaces that can support a healthy lifestyle. Libraries have reading areas and fun activities. Parks are a place to meet and play. Schools often have parent resource centers. Faith-based centers help us nurture our spiritual needs and develop long-term friendships.

For more information on all aspects of Family Wellness, contact:
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