



# Nutrition: Simple Steps to a Healthier You!

By Marjorie Maxwell, RD, Esse Health

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According to the American Dietetic Association, March is National Nutrition Month and the theme this year is “Eat Right From the Ground Up”. The campaign focuses attention on the importance of making informed food choices and developing sound eating and physical activity habits.

Remember the old joke “If it tastes good, don’t eat it?” Old nutrition messages implied boring and tasteless meals. Well those days are long behind us. We have so many more options today and healthy food no longer has to be boring! Food is versatile and has so many purposes in our lives. It is fuel for athletes, calcium for bone strength, calories for growth, and fiber for cancer prevention. It is time to return to family meals with time to savor our food and connect with family. It is time to start thinking optimal rather than deprivation.

Like many of our modern habits, eating has room for improvement in quality and quantity. The average American eats only 15 grams of the recommended daily 30 grams of fiber and our potassium intakes are in the basement. Learning to plan meals, shop healthier and budget time for family meals will optimize our potentials.

A good way to start eating healthier is to create a plan. Consult a Registered Dietitian that can help set goals for you and your family. They can provide you with the information and resources you need to find a plan that works for you.

If you are overwhelmed by the myriad of diet advice in the media, keep a food journal. In your journal write down everything you eat and drink for at least one week. When you take a look back you might be surprised to see that you are consuming over 400 calories in soda a day.

You can also use evidence based nutrition evaluations such as [www.mypyramidtracker.gov](http://www.mypyramidtracker.gov). Provided by the USDA, this tool allows you to see how your choices stack up to your age and gender based targets. You can assess both your food intake and physical activity.

Improving your eating habits is not as simple as reading a pamphlet or eating whole wheat bread. Evidence shows that participation in a support group dramatically increases the chances for your success. Find a support group in your area and bring your family. They can be fun and educational at the same time!

Supplements can help but it appears you cannot fool Mother Nature. Calcium in dairy products is better absorbed than calcium in supplements. Blood pressure lowering potassium in foods is not the same as potassium in supplements. It is human nature to want a simple solution to a complex problem, but when it comes to nutrition there are no short cuts.

Nutrition also plays a vital role in disease management. For example, the overall quality of the diet was more effective in lowering blood pressure than one single nutrient. Today most people diagnosed with diabetes are first treated with diet and exercise.

If you describe your current diet by listing the foods you do not eat, push the reset button. Nutrition is what you do eat. Having a plan and choosing to eat right can dramatically increase your quality of life. Frankly, a month does not begin to cover it. We need at least a nutrition decade.

#### Resources:

- [Dole SuperKids](#)
- [American Dietetic Association](#)

[www.essehealth.com](http://www.essehealth.com)



# Poison Prevention: Tips to Minimize Your Child's Risks

By Dr. Peter Putnam, Pediatrician, Esse Health

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Since the Pure Food and Drug Act was passed in 1906, numerous legislative and product engineering efforts have been implemented to reduce the risk of injury or death from poisoning. For example, child proof packaging now required by law on certain products prevented 86,000 poison exposures from 1974 to 1981 and decreased deaths by aspirin ingestion by 34 percent from 1973 to 1990.

Despite these successes, poisoning remains a common threat to the health and safety of children. Approximately 1.3 million children are exposed to poison every year in the United States. Since 90 percent of poison exposures occur at home, consider these tips to minimize the chance that your child could become poisoned:

- Keep harmful products locked up and out of your child's sight and reach. This includes medications (both prescription and over-the-counter), cleaning agents, and other household, garage, and garden chemicals.
  - Use safety latches or locks on drawers and cabinets where you keep dangerous items. Also consider putting hazardous products in an elevated, hard to reach cabinet or locked container. Remember that these drawer locks and latches can wear out over time so check them periodically for proper functioning.
  - Call medicine by its correct name. You do not want to confuse the child by calling medicine candy. Always replace the safety caps immediately after use. Never let a child play with a bottle of medicine, even if it is empty, as this may confuse younger children.
  - Teach children not to drink or eat anything unless it is given to them by an adult. Never put non food products in food or drink containers. Never leave alcoholic beverages within a child's reach.
  - Seek immediate help if your child swallows a substance that is not food. Do not make your child vomit. Instead call the Poison Help Line at (800) 222-1222. Have the container of the ingested substance available to report to the Poison Center. It is also important to be able to estimate how much of the harmful product may have been ingested.
  - If you find your child unresponsive, not breathing, or having trouble breathing following a chemical exposure, immediately call 911.
  - Keep products in their original containers. Read labels with care before using any product. Be especially cautious with "look alike" substances (many household cleaning fluids have the same appearance as colorful children's beverages).
  - Do not take medicine in front of small children. Children tend to copy adult behavior.
  - Check your home often for old medications and old-fashioned treatments such as oil of wintergreen, boric acid, ammoniated mercury, oil of turpentine, and camphorated oil. It is no longer appropriate to dispose of old medicines by flushing them down the toilet. Instead, check with your pharmacist or your physician on how best to get rid of old medicines. Many counties or municipalities have hazardous chemical collections once or twice a year. Dispose of harmful household chemicals at one of these events.
  - If your child spends a large amount of time in another person's house (such as a grandparent or baby sitter), check to make sure these tips are employed to decrease the chance of poisoning. Offer to assist your friends and family in making their home safe for your child.
- Fortunately, most poisoning exposures do not result in death. In 2007, only 46 children younger than 12 years of age died from poisoning in the United States. Unfortunately, almost all of these deaths could have been prevented. Please ask your Esse Health Pediatrician how you can prevent your child from being poisoned. He or she would be happy to help you make your home safe to keep your child as healthy as possible.

#### Sources:

- ["Prevention of Poisoning in Children," Up to Date online medical reference.](#)
  - TIPP—The Injury Prevention Program (Copyright © 1994 American Academy of Pediatrics)
  - [PoisonPrevention.org](http://PoisonPrevention.org)
- [www.essehealth.com](http://www.essehealth.com)



## Where There's a Wii, There's a Way

By Diane Pierce, Nurse Case Manager, Esse Health

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It is hard to believe but the Nintendo *Wii* hit the market almost five years ago. Its popularity and success seemed to take off overnight, but not just because it was the hottest new gaming system. Soon after its debut we started to hear stories about local hospitals and senior centers using the *Wii* to speed up recovery times for children and adults suffering from acute illnesses and chronic conditions.

Now, across the country doctors are treating their patients with a unique form of rehab they are calling "Wii-Hab". At Mercy General Hospital in California doctors are using *Wii* games in the acute rehabilitation center for stroke patients. For these patients traditional physical therapy seems like work, but because of the repetition in games like *Wii Bowl* patients are able to achieve similar results by gaining strength and increasing mobility. It also gives patients the opportunity to interact socially, which makes the rehabilitation and the recovery process a little more fun.

With stories still swirling around the positive health benefits linked to some of the original games, Nintendo launched *Wii Fit* and a line of accessories. According to USA Today, since the introduction in 2008 Nintendo's *Wii Fit* has sold over 21 million copies. The original *Wii Fit* was only on the market for a little over a year when Nintendo introduced a new enhanced version called *Wii Fit Plus*. Both games offer yoga, strength training, aerobics and balance games.

Although nothing beats a session in your local gym, the *Wii Fit* and *Wii Fit Plus* help children and adults of all ages get some much needed physical activity. The original *Wii Fit* introduced the Balance Board controller. When you stand on the Balance Board it tracks your weight and shifts in your balance. These shifts in your weight and balance are then incorporated into the game to control the scoring for your character.

With the new *Wii Fit Plus*, you get everything from the original game plus new features and more

content. For example, players are able to create a personalized workout, track calories burned and select from pre-set workouts to target specific areas of their body. The *Wii Fit Plus* also adds 15 balance games, three new strength training exercises and three new yoga poses. With the addition of the 15 new games, the *Wii Fit Plus* offers players over 60 games to choose from.

Again, the *Wii Fit* and *Wii Fit Plus* are great for children and adults of all ages. With games like virtual snowball fighting and ski jump your kids will be getting a good dose of exercise and will not even know it! Bottom line is if you are looking for a great way for your family to reconnect and get some exercise, consider a Nintendo *Wii* console and *Wii Fit* or *Wii Fit Plus*. Organize a family game night or develop your own exercise plan and encourage your kids to participate with you.

If you have not gotten around to purchasing a *Wii Fit* and you are debating between the original or the *Wii Fit Plus*, most reviews indicate that the *Wii Fit Plus* is an improvement over the original. At most retailers you can purchase the *Wii Fit Plus* with the Balance Board for right around \$100. If you already own a *Wii Fit*, you can purchase the upgraded *Wii Fit Plus* discs for around \$19.99.

#### Resources:

- [Nintendo Wii Fit website](http://www.nintendo.com/wiifit)

[www.essehealth.com](http://www.essehealth.com)