



ACPeds Parent Talk

Keeping parents up to date on the latest news in child and teen health

Family Health Goals for 2018

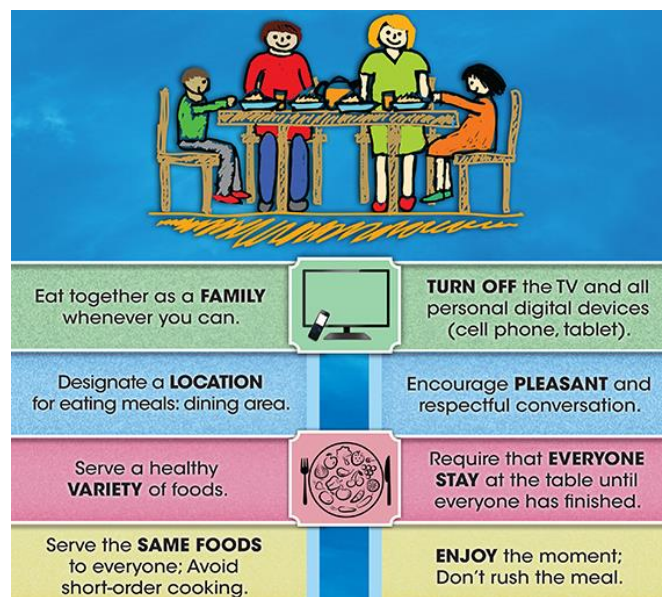
Now that 2018 has just begun and kids and adults alike are contemplating resolutions they'd like to make for the new year, it only makes sense to highlight some important research to help inform your decisions.

1. Have Family Meals

ACPeds (1) has been saying for years that **family meals foster family connectedness and benefit child and family health by**

- enhancing language development,
- improving nutrition,
- decreasing risk of drug, alcohol, and nicotine use,
- improving family relations,
- decreasing risk of engaging in sexual activity, and
- decreasing emotional stress.

So it's no surprise that last year, researchers from all over the world published scientific studies which came to that same conclusion. One such [study](#) (2) from Montreal, Canada found that **"Children who routinely eat their meals together with their family are more likely to experience long-term physical and mental health benefits."**



On the other hand, a UK [study](#) (3) found that "children who eat restaurant carry-out, or 'takeaway,' meals once a week or more tend to have extra body fat and long-term risk factors for heart disease."

[How to Have a Healthy Family Table](#) (4) - ACPeds patient information handout

2. Play Outside as a Family

[Research](#) (5) shows that **play helps children develop social skills like cooperation and empathy; and for adults, play can help boost energy and vitality and improve resistance to disease.**

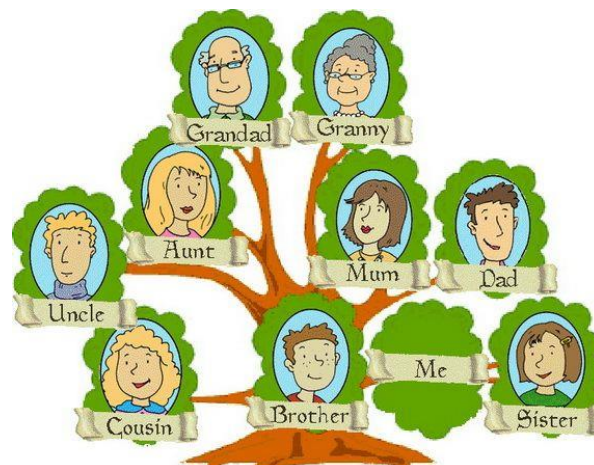


Playing outside can deliver double the benefits. For kids, [research](#) (6) shows that **time spent in nature can improve kids' problem-solving skills, self-confidence and their ability to focus.** For adults, [studies](#) (7) show that time spent outside can boost the immune system, lower blood pressure, and help fight depression and anxiety.

[Playing with Your Child](#) (8) - ACPeds blog post

3. Reach Out to Extended Family

A recent [study](#) (9) showed that **kids with a high level of grandparental involvement had fewer emotional and behavioral problems,** and a [research](#) (10) article described how spending time with children can bring purpose and meaning to the lives of older generations.



For single parents, extended family members can serve as a support system and can often substitute as role models for children missing a dad or a mom.

[Benefits of Extended Family](#) (11) - ACPeds blog post

4. Work on Family Relationships (especially the marriage)

[Research](#) (12) shows that children with married parents (both a mother and a father) have more healthful measures of

- thriving as infants,
- physical and mental health,
- educational attainment,
- protection from poverty,
- protection from antisocial behavior, and
- protection from physical abuse.



Clearly, [marriage matters](#) (13) and the best kind of marriage is one in which both mom and dad are happy and healthy. **Work on your marriage, spend quality time with your spouse and watch the benefits accumulate, not just for you and your spouse but for your children and the family unit as a whole.**

[Why Marriage Matters](#) (14) - ACPeds Blog Post

5. Watch Less TV by Replacing Screen Time with Family Fun Time

According to a recent [study](#) (15), **the more time adults spend watching television, the greater their risk for blood clots** - even if they get plenty of exercise. According to another [study](#) (16), watching television for three hours a day may increase a child's risk of diabetes.



Instead, play board games, listen to music, and talk about your goals and dreams as a family. People often use screen time as a way to de-stress and 'veg-out' after a busy day; but spending quality time with people you love is an even better way to relax and take your mind off the stresses of the day.

[3 Benefits of family fun](#) (17) - ACPeds blog post

6. Get Adequate Sleep

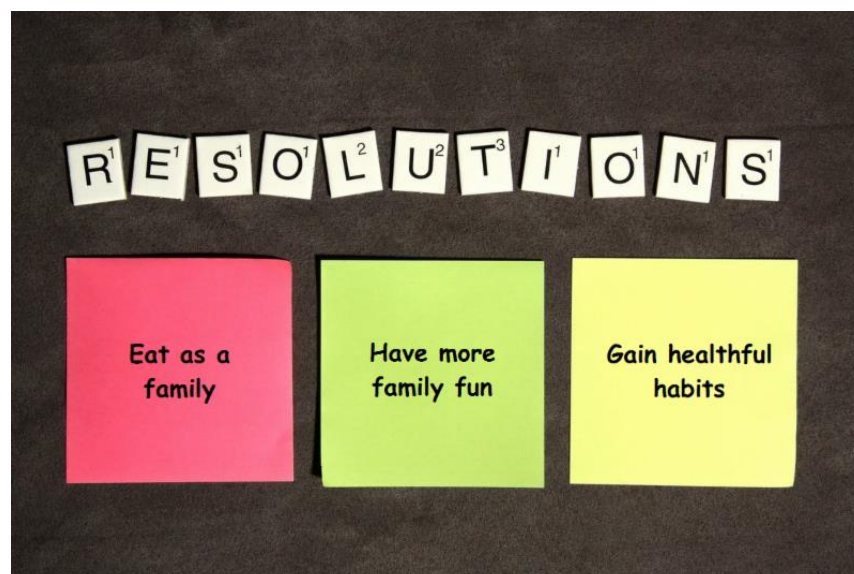
[Research](#) (18) shows that **not getting enough sleep each night is associated with an increase in injuries, hypertension, obesity and depression, especially for teens who may experience increased risk of self-harm or suicidal thoughts.**

ACCORDING TO THE NATIONAL SLEEP FOUNDATION	
INFANTS: UP TO 16 HOURS, INCLUDING NAPS	TODDLERS (1-3 YEARS OLD): 12-14 HOURS, INCLUDING NAPS
PRESCHOOL (3-5 YEARS OLD): 11-13 HOURS	SCHOOL AGE (6-12 YEARS OLD): 10-11 HOURS
TEENS: 8.5 HOURS TO 9.5 HOURS	ADULTS: 7-9 HOURS

However, adequate sleep on a regular basis leads to improved attention, behavior, learning, memory, emotional regulation, quality of life, and mental and physical health.

[Getting Enough Sleep for You and Your Child](#) (19) - ACPeds blog post

Ultimately, don't make your resolutions so lofty that you and your family are unable to keep up with them. **Keep it simple and make some general decisions that apply to the whole family.** Then, you won't be the only one making an effort to keep them.



For a simplified list of 3 resolutions you can share with your spouse and children, view the ACPeds blog post [Family Resolutions for 2018](#) (20) and **leave a comment!**

We love to hear from our readers and hope to receive your feedback!

Check [ACPeds.org/Blog](http://www.acpeds.org/Blog) each Monday & Friday for a new post. Visit www.acpeds.org/subscribe to subscribe to the blog and click [here](#) (21) to subscribe to the Parent Talk newsletter.



Don't hesitate to contact us with your questions and comments. We look forward to hearing from you.

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1. <https://www.acpeds.org/the-college-speaks/position-statements/parenting-issues/the-benefits-of-the-family-table>
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3. <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-health-children-takeaway-meals/regular-carry-out-meals-linked-to-higher-body-and-blood-fats-in-kids-iduskbn1eq17d>
4. <https://www.acpeds.org/wordpress/wp-content/uploads/how-to-have-a-healthy-family-table.pdf>
5. <http://www.parentingcounts.org/parent-handouts/information-for-parents-play.pdf>
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