



Guide to Building a Healthy Future for Young Girls

presented by

zero
breast cancer

What can we do about girls developing earlier than ever before?

Forward

Studies show that how active a girl is, how much she sleeps and how much TV she watches can speed up or slow down a girl's puberty. We can take simple actions to help delay it or slow it down. These same things will help her be healthier all her life!

Healthy & Happy

Some girls are tall, some are curvy; no body type is right or wrong. This guide doesn't focus on weight. The important thing is to be as fit and healthy as we can in our bodies and where we live!

This guide has proven information to help parents/caregivers and girls. The 5 sections cover things we know affect a girl's hormones—the signals that tell her body to develop—and her health. You'll find tips, quizzes and a list of videos where you (and she!) can learn more.

Questions? Comments? We want to hear from you! Reach out and let us know what you think.

We can improve girls' health!

Zero Breast Cancer

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<https://www.facebook.com/girlsnewpuberty/>

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Move More & More Often

The average kid spends more time watching/streaming TV or playing on computers than running and playing. Help your daughter avoid too much sitting. Although quiet time for reading and homework is fine, limit TV, video games and surfing the web to no more than 2 hours a day. [Click here for tips to help reduce screen time.](#)

When your daughter is on a screen, set a timer and have her move for at least 5 minutes every hour. Try:

- Jumping jacks
- Dancing
- Racing up and down stairs
- Sit-ups
- Stretching
- Jogging in place
- Yoga moves
- Active house chores



Encourage Physical Activity

Many girls at this age start to drop out of organized sports because they think they are not athletic. The truth is we all need physical activity to be healthy. Kids need to build strong hearts, muscles and bones. Many types of exercise also help with balance and flexibility. *Kids need at least 60 minutes of activity every day. It may sound like a lot, but small amounts add up.* Read more about [playing sports](#) and [being active](#) here. If your child has asthma or a disability, talk with her doctor, nurse or an expert about the best activities for her abilities.

Benefits of Moving More - Regular physical exercise is good for a girl's body, mind, and spirit. When girls keep moving, they're more likely to:

- Feel less stressed
- Feel better about themselves
- Feel more ready to learn in school
- Keep a healthy weight
- Build and keep healthy bones, muscles and joints
- Sleep better at night

Finding the Time - It can be tough to find the time and place for being active. But remember, it doesn't have to take a long time or cost money. You and your daughter can spend time together by going for bike rides, walking, hula hooping, dancing, or jumping rope; let her choose an activity she likes and will sustain. For classes, check out videos (online or at the library), community centers or local parks and recreation. Another easy way to build activity into your kid's day is walking or biking to school. Before allowing this, consider: Is it possible? Is it safe? PE at school is also good.

Being active early in life may help prevent early puberty or slow puberty already in progress. It also helps lower the risk of heart disease and even breast cancer later in life!

Be a Role Model: Get out with your daughter and play with her, go for bike rides or hikes on the weekends. This is also a chance to talk.



Quiz: Girls' Fitness

1. Kids should aim to exercise every day. They need at least:
 - A. 20 minutes of activity
 - B. 40 minutes of activity
 - C. 60 minutes of activity

2. Physical activity can help with:
 - A. Staying a healthy weight
 - B. Getting better sleep
 - C. Building strong bones
 - D. A more positive mood
 - E. All of the above

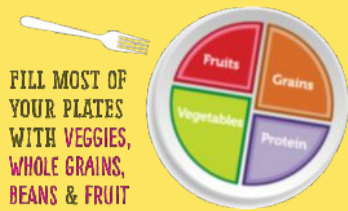
3. When active, it is best to drink:
 - A. Only when thirsty
 - B. Lots of sports and energy drinks
 - C. Water, before, during, and after exercising

4. How hard girls work out is important.
 - A. True
 - B. False

5. Girls can never get too much exercise.
 - A. True
 - B. False

6. Physical activity is only for real athletes.
 - A. True
 - B. False

[Answers on page 13.](#)



EAT HEALTHY

Our bodies need food to keep going, but what we eat is important. Processed foods and sugar seem to speed up puberty. To be their healthiest, girls need the right kinds and amounts of fuel for their growing bodies.

Easy Tips for Eating Healthy

There's no great secret to healthy eating. Help build good habits at home by:

- Providing lots of vegetables and fruits
- Using whole-grains (like whole wheat bread or pasta, oats, corn tortillas, and brown rice)
- Including beans, lentils, nuts, fish, chicken/poultry or lean meats for protein (avoid processed meats)
- Buying low-fat milk or dairy products
- Limiting sweets (try fruit for dessert)

Smart Snacks and Healthy Cooking - Make healthy snacks, like fresh fruits and vegetables or nuts, the easy choice: keep them in a bowl on the kitchen counter or in the front of the refrigerator. Look for ways to make favorite dishes healthier. [Check out some tricks to make your family's favorite dish or recipe healthier and just as tasty.](#)

Keep It Clean - Wash produce (fruits and vegetables) to remove dirt and pesticides. Choose produce that has fewer pesticides and consider buying organic if you need items that have more pesticides (check out [EWG's "dirty dozen"](#) to find out when buying organic is most important).

Emphasize Healthy Eating, Not Dieting or Weight - Every girl has her own build and as she grows, she needs to gain weight. You can help your daughter understand that her body size and shape are okay by avoiding negative statements about food, weight, and body size and shape.

Read Food Labels - A trick to choosing healthy food is to [read the label](#). Watch out for sucrose, corn syrup and fructose. They are all sugar, sugar, and sugar! Sugar hides in all kinds of food, like salad dressing, bread, and spaghetti sauce. If your kids shop with you, have them help look for the best choices.

Don't Drink Your Calories - Did you know that our bodies are almost 60% water -- that's more than half! Thirst is your body telling you to drink more water. In most places bottled water is no better than tap water, so filter if you need to, but keep your family drinking lots of water -- especially on hot days! Soda lovers in your family? Instead of soda or sports/energy drinks, choose water with lemon/lime or other fresh fruits.

*Talk to your daughter about how good food looks and tastes.
Healthy foods are tasty and don't have to be expensive.*

Quiz: Food Facts



1. Fat is bad for us.
 - A. True
 - B. False
2. Some types of fat are better for us than others.
 - A. True
 - B. False
3. The following are good sources of protein:
 - A. Milk
 - B. Beans
 - C. Chicken or other poultry
 - D. Fish
 - E. All of the above
4. Calcium helps bones develop and prevents them from breaking, so girls have to keep getting enough calcium their whole life.
 - A. True
 - B. False
5. Why do kids need vitamin D?
 - A. To help with digestion
 - B. To help hair grow
 - C. To help calcium build bones
 - D. So vitamin C won't get lonely
6. Which is the best choice?
 - A. Whole-wheat bread
 - B. White bread
 - C. White rice
 - D. Fruit juice
7. Not all yogurts are good for us.
 - A. True
 - B. False
8. Experts recommend filling half our plates with fruits and vegetables.
 - A. True
 - B. False
9. There are unhealthy ways to lose weight.
 - A. True
 - B. False

[Answers on page 13.](#)

get enough sleep



Sleep is important for everyone, especially kids. At night, while they sleep, hormones are released that they need to develop. Enough sleep helps keep the body and immune system strong in puberty and in the future. Younger kids, ages 5 to 10 years old, need 10-11 hours of sleep. Older kids, ages 10 to 17 years old, need 8.5-9.25 hours of sleep. [Click for sleeping tips.](#)

If your child is feeling grumpy or dozing off in school, it could be due to lack of sleep. Lack of sleep hurts school work and lowers the metabolism. It also makes us hungry and more likely to eat junk food.

Did you know that sleep helps us reach and maintain a healthy weight? Lowering stress, diet and exercise play a part, too. [Learn more about sleep.](#)

A Restful Night

Screens Off - A restful night begins with turning all screens off. It is best to avoid TV, computers and phones at least one hour before bed. Light, especially blue light, wakes up the brain and changes hormones.

Prepare Her Room for Sleep - It is easier to sleep in a place that is cool, quiet, and dark. You can even try eyeshades or blackout curtains, then let in sunlight in the morning to help wake her up. Avoid watching TV or playing with electronics in bed.

Bedtime Routine - Having a quiet bedtime routine begins by taking 30 minutes to unwind and prepare for sleep. This can help your daughter make and keep healthy sleeping habits. Set a regular bedtime and stick to quiet, calm activities before bed such as a bath, brushing teeth and reading together.

Limit Sleep Interruptions - Reduce late night trips to the bathroom and bad dreams by avoiding drinks and meals close to bedtime.

Memory and Learning - Sleep helps our brains [process events and information](#). Take time to talk things through and calm down before bed.



Lack of sleep feels like hunger;
enough sleep helps maintain a healthy weight.



Quiz: Sleeping

1. Even if kids are only a little bit sleepy, it may affect how well they do on a test or playing sports.
A. True
B. False
2. Most teens need about 7.5 hours of sleep each night.
A. True
B. False
3. Bright lighting and sunlight can help wake kids up in the morning.
A. True
B. False
4. Talking or participating in a class discussion can help wake up sleepy kids.
A. True
B. False
5. The best time for kids to study for a test is right before bed, to make sure they remember everything.
A. True
B. False
6. It's best not to nap too late in the day, or it will make it hard to sleep at night.
A. True
B. False

[Answers on page 14.](#)

manage stress



During puberty, emotions are stronger. Studies show that pre-teen and teen brains react differently than adults. Teens need to take time to calmly [talk things through](#). Stress can also trigger hormones and speed up her development. And as her body changes, that can cause stress, too. Luckily, there are ways that we can help her control how she responds to the changes and stress. [Read what kids say about handling stress.](#)

Tips to Help Her Manage Stress

Limit Media Exposure - Social media affects how girls feel about their bodies and themselves. Help her self-image by talking about how girls and women look on TV, the internet and in magazines. *Talk about who your daughter is instead of how she looks.* [Check out these tips for fostering a healthy body image.](#)



What Kids Are Saying - Most girls care what others think and say. If she has a cell phone, watch for abuse or bullying. Try to monitor her use of the internet. [Learn what bullying is and how to prevent or stop it.](#)

Restore (Your) Calm - Take a walk, listen to music or laugh together. Girls that develop early can be uncomfortable with their bodies, feel different and get attention they don't want or like. Find her books, enlist her doctor/nurse and talk to her about peer pressure. Focus on what she can understand -- remember her body and brain may not be at the same stage.

Compliment Her Strengths - Instead of telling her she is pretty, focus on what she does and praise her efforts whether she gets an "A" or wins or not. Use words like strong and healthy; "You were such a good friend today," "You were brave to tell me how mad you were," "I like how you stand up for yourself," "I'm proud of how hard you studied for that test."

Be a Role Model - There are lots of healthy things we can all do to cope with our stress:

- Exercise
- Draw or color (not just for kids!)
- Stretching or yoga
- Quiet time or [meditation](#)
- Take a nap
- Read a book

Exercise + Healthy Food + Sleep
All help us manage stress.

Quiz: Address Stress



1. Which of the following can help girls deal with stress:
 - A. Exercise
 - B. Quiet time/meditation
 - C. Listening to music
 - D. Eating healthy
 - E. All of the above
2. It's best to talk about who a girl is rather than how she looks.
 - A. True
 - B. False
3. What do you think was the number one cause of stress for kids (ages 9 to 13) in the Nemours' KidsHealth® KidsPoll?
 - A. Family
 - B. Friends, peers, gossip and teasing
 - C. Grades, school and homework
 - D. Not sleeping enough
4. Talking things through calmly with girls shows them a healthy way to deal with strong emotions.
 - A. True
 - B. False
5. One way to help improve girls' body image is to talk about unhealthy messages from the media.
 - A. True
 - B. False

[Answers on page 14.](#)

Limit Chemicals



Kids' hormones are more active as they develop. Things around them have chemicals that get into their bodies and act like some of those hormones. Studies show that chemicals can speed up, slow down or change their development. And most have never been tested to see if they are safe or not! Here are some [ideas for avoiding chemicals](#) we know cause problems.

Tips for Avoiding Chemicals that Affect Hormones

Wash Fresh Fruits and Vegetables - Choose fresh or frozen foods and limit canned, processed and prepared foods. Cook more from scratch.

Use Fewer and Choose Unscented Personal Care Products - Cut down on lotions and cosmetics, especially perfumes and scented products. While products with scents or fragrance may smell good, they have hidden chemicals that are absorbed into the blood through our skin and our lungs. They can cause allergies, weight gain and affect your child's development.



[Find out which are the best \(lowest\) scoring foods and beauty products on EWG's Healthy Living smartphone app!](#)

Get Rid of Bugs Safely - Click [here](#) to learn how to safely get rid of bugs from your home, yard or garden.

Practice Sun Safety - Choose a sunscreen with non-nano zinc oxide or titanium dioxide. Avoid sprays and products with oxybenzone or vitamin A. Or save money by wearing a hat or staying in the shade.

Use Greener Cleaners - Choose safe, non-toxic cleaners or make your own with baking soda and vinegar. Skip air fresheners, scented detergents, and dryer sheets. [Check out these DIY recipes.](#)

Stay or Get Smoke-Free - Smoking in homes and cars makes it harder for kids (and you!) to breathe. You can lower risk of asthma, ear problems and infections by making your home and vehicles smoke-free. [There is free help to quit smoking.](#)



Avoid Plastics! Microwave foods in glass or ceramic and fill up your metal or glass water bottle. Save money and the earth!



Quiz: Chemical Exposures

1. The U.S. Food and Drug Administration does not make sure all make-up is safe before a company can sell it.
A. True
B. False
2. Chemicals hiding in our homes can get into our bodies and act like hormones.
A. True
B. False
3. Some fruits and vegetables have more pesticides than others.
A. True
B. False
4. You can get rid of pests without chemical pesticides.
A. True
B. False
5. Fresh and frozen foods often have fewer chemicals than canned, processed and prepared foods.
A. True
B. False

[Answers on page 15.](#)

Answers to Quizzes

Girls' Fitness Quiz

1. **C** - Young people should aim for 60 minutes or more of activity each day. If there isn't an hour all at once, try doing 10 minutes at a time.
2. **E** - Physical activity can help kids' bodies and minds. Not being active, though, can lead to health problems.
3. **C** - If we wait until we're thirsty, we may have already lost the fluid we need. Energy drinks can be full of caffeine, which can keep us up at night and cause other problems.
4. **TRUE** - To get the most health benefits, kids should be active at a medium or intense level for 60 minutes of physical activity every day. Aim for the intense level at least three days a week.
5. **FALSE** - Actually, sometimes girls can exercise too much. If exercise is so important that they often choose it over friends and responsibilities, work out even when they have an injury, or get very upset if they miss a workout, they may be at risk for an eating disorder or other health problems.
6. **FALSE** - Anyone can be active. If she doesn't like sports, she can try walking more. Encourage her to try different activities like dancing, yoga and hula hooping. The best activity is one she enjoys and will keep doing!

Food Facts Quiz

1. **FALSE** - The truth is, kids' bodies need some fat to grow and work well. Between 25% and 35% of their calories should come from fat.
2. **TRUE** - Some types of fat are better than others. Try to avoid saturated and trans fats. Unsaturated fats are better for us.
3. **E** - All of these are good sources of protein: milk, beans, chicken or other poultry, and fish. Choose low-fat or fat-free milk instead of whole milk, though.
4. **TRUE** - Calcium helps prevent broken bones. The main years for building strong bone are the childhood and teen years. Building strong bones now can help prevent bone problems later in life.
5. **C** - Vitamin D helps calcium build bones.
6. **A** - Whole-wheat bread is a whole grain. Whole grains like brown rice, oatmeal, and whole-wheat bread are good for our health.
7. **TRUE** - Yogurt can be great for us, but each brand and flavor of yogurt is different. Added toppings and sugars can make yogurt less healthy. Read labels to compare products. See how much sugar and other ingredients that should be limited, such as trans fat, are in similar foods.
8. **TRUE** - Filling up half of our plates with fruits and vegetables can help ensure we eat enough of these foods. Overall, the USDA recommends girls ages 4-8 have 1 to 1.5 cups of fruit per day and girls ages 9-13 have 1.5 cups. The USDA also recommends girls ages 4-8 have 1.5 cups of vegetables each day, while girls ages 9-13 have 2 cups.
9. **TRUE** - Extreme or fad diets limit foods too much. Kids won't get the nutrients they need to be healthy if they follow an extremely strict diet. And people who use crash diets usually gain back the weight they lose.

Answers to Quizzes

Sleeping Quiz

1. **TRUE** - Even being a little bit sleepy during the day can affect how well kids do in school and how well they play sports. And not getting enough sleep can make them feel depressed and cranky.
2. **FALSE** - Experts say most teens need just over 9 hours of sleep each night to be at their best. (For some, 8½ is enough.)
3. **TRUE** - It's good to get into bright light as soon as possible in the morning. The light lets our brains know that it is time to wake up. At night, it is best to avoid bright light so that our bodies can get ready to sleep.
4. **TRUE** - Talking or being part of a class discussion can help perk kids up, while keeping quiet can make them more tired.
5. **FALSE** - Our bodies need time to relax before we go to bed each night. It is best to avoid heavy reading within one hour of going to sleep. Also, all-night or late-night study sessions are not the best way to prepare for a test--a good night's sleep is.
6. **TRUE** - It is better to take a nap in the early afternoon rather than late afternoon or early evening.

Address Stress Quiz

1. **E** - Exercise, quiet time/meditation, listening to music and eating healthy are all positive ways for girls (and all of us!) to manage stress. People cope with stress best in different ways. You can help by asking about what makes her feel stressed and what activities make her feel better. Then, encourage her to do those activities when she is stressed out.
2. **TRUE** - Girls are often praised for looking nice or pretty, which can send the message that their appearance is the most important thing about them. By focusing on her kindness, hard work, and healthy actions, you can help her know that who she is and what she can do matter most.
3. **C** - In [Nemours' KidsHealth® KidsPoll](#), kids ages 9 to 13 said they were most stressed by grades, school and homework (36%). Family (32%) was a close second and friends, peers, gossip and teasing (21%) was not far behind at third.
4. **TRUE** - When girls are encouraged to talk about how they are feeling, it can help them have words to describe their emotions, learn to identify what is stressful, and come up with healthy ways to respond. Learn more [here](#).
5. **TRUE** - In the TV shows, movies, websites, social apps and other media girls see, most girls and women are tall and very thin. Girls' bodies are changing and even models often feel bad about their appearance. Talking with her about what she sees and letting her know beauty comes in all shapes and sizes can help strengthen her self-image. Learn more [here](#).

Answers to Quizzes

Chemical Exposures Quiz

- 1. TRUE** - Unlike drugs, the FDA does not approve all cosmetics. You will find some cosmetics for sale in the U.S. have chemicals that are banned in Europe and are known or suspected to cause health problems. California has a Safe Cosmetics Program Database, which requires companies to report ingredients that are known or suspected to cause cancer, birth defects, or other reproductive harm. Check out their database [here](#). You can also use apps like [Think Dirty](#) or [Healthy Living](#) to choose safer cosmetics.
- 2. TRUE** - Household cleaners, foam in furniture, and indoor dust are only a few of the places in the home that contain chemicals known to disrupt hormones, which can contribute to girls starting puberty earlier and other health problems. Check out the Silent Springs Institute's [DetoxMe](#) app or [website](#) for steps you can take to reduce the chemicals hiding in your home, yard and community.
- 3. TRUE** - Some produce has more types of pesticides or higher amounts than others. Each year, the Environmental Working Group (EWG) creates lists of the "[Dirty Dozen](#)" (produce with the most pesticides) and "[Clean Fifteen](#)" (produce with the fewest pesticides) to help you know when it's most important to buy organic. If you can't buy organic, spend extra time washing items with more pesticides or consider buying produce with fewer pesticides instead.
- 4. TRUE** - Often, bugs and rodents will leave your home if they don't have access to food or water, or if they can't get in. You can discourage them from settling in by clearing clutter where they like to hide and sealing cracks and holes where they can get inside. Learn more [here](#).
- 5. TRUE** - Canned, processed and prepared foods can have hidden chemicals. For example, cans are commonly lined with substances known to act like hormones and prepared frozen dinners usually come in plastic containers or containers lined with plastic. Transfer food from plastic to glass or ceramic containers when heating to reduce the chemicals that end up in your food.

Video Resources



[What is puberty? \(Video length: 2:11\)](#)



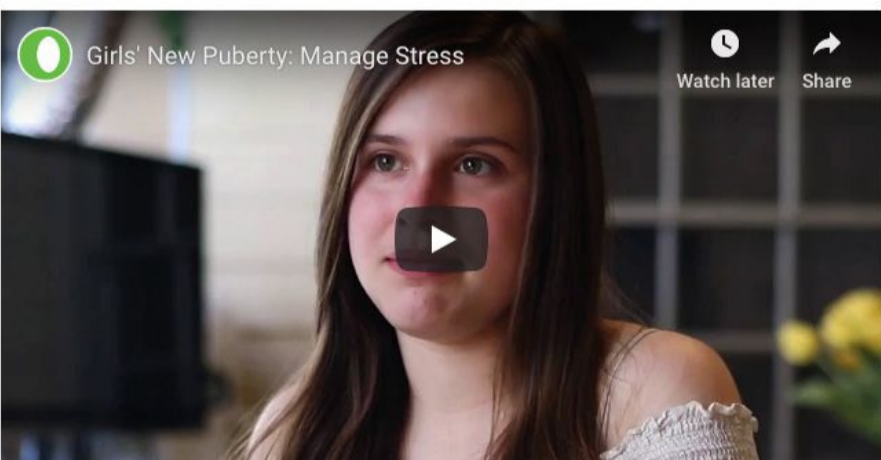
[Move More Often \(Video length: 2:23\)](#)



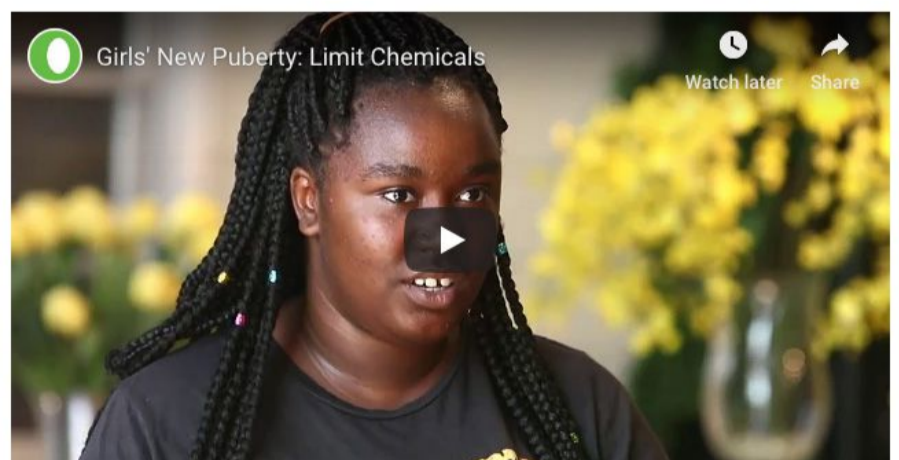
[Eating Healthy \(Video length: 1:46\)](#)



[Getting Sleep \(Video length: 1:24\)](#)



[Manage Stress \(Video length: 2:27\)](#)



[Limit Chemicals \(Video length: 2:00\)](#)

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This ebook is adapted from the [Guide to Girls New Puberty microsite](#).

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