

After reading this lesson, click the survey link at the end to answer a few questions and receive nutrition education credit for your class.

# Gifts for a Healthy Heart



**Have you ever stopped to think about what your little one will look like in 40 years?**

Close your eyes and try to imagine them as a grown adult. Are they healthy? Do they have the ability to work, exercise and raise their own family? Or do you see your grown child sick with heart disease, barely able to carry out daily activities?

Most of us don't spend much time thinking about the heart health of our future grown child even though we play a big role in how healthy their heart will be. We can actually help them prevent high cholesterol, high blood pressure and obesity by taking care of their little hearts right now! By giving your child the following 7 gifts, you can help them have a healthy, happy heart! While these gifts are very valuable, they really don't cost you anything!

### **GIFT #1:** **Begin by breastfeeding your baby.**

- Breastfeeding is the best way to feed your baby. Breastfed babies are less likely to be obese.
- Delay introducing solids and juice until baby is developmentally ready. Babies are likely ready for solids when they can hold their head up, open their mouth for a spoon and move food from a spoon into their throat. Feeding babies solids and juice too early increases their chances of being overweight.
- Don't overfeed infants and young children. They can usually self-regulate the amount of food they need each day. Babies shouldn't be forced to finish eating when they are no longer hungry.

### **GIFT #2:** **Limit high sugar drinks.**

- Avoid soda, sweet tea, juice, Kool-Aid, and sports drinks.
- Sugary beverages contain empty calories, which can lead to obesity. They can also cause tooth decay.

### **GIFT #3:** **Make heart healthy food choices.**

- Eat foods low in saturated fat, trans fat, cholesterol and salt.
- Choose lean meats, fish, and protein foods such as baked chicken, grilled salmon, lean beef, beans and peas without added fat.
- Serve a variety of fruits and vegetables daily while limiting juice to no more than 6oz per day. Never serve juice in a bottle.
- After the age of 2, serve low-fat or non-fat dairy products. Children from 12 to 24 months of age need whole milk. Whole milk should never be given in a bottle since children should be weaned from the bottle at 1 year of age.
- Serve whole grain breads and cereals rather than refined grain products.

### **GIFT #4:** **Limit Screen Time.**

- Viewing food and beverage advertising leads to a higher intake of unhealthy foods and drinks.
- The more screen time children watch, the more they tend to overeat.
- Too much screen time has been associated with poor performance in school and a decrease in the quality of sleep.
- Recommendations for screen time by The American Academy of Pediatrics:
  - Less than 2 years: video chatting only
  - 2-5 years: 1 hour/day



**GIFT #5:**

**Do not smoke. Smoking is the leading cause of preventable disease and deaths in the United States.**

- Smoking by itself increases the risk of heart disease. When combined with other risk factors like obesity, high cholesterol, and high blood pressure, it greatly increases the risk.
- According to the American Lung Association, more than 480,000 people a year die from heart and blood vessel disease caused by use and exposure.

**GIFT #6:**

**Eat together as a family.**

- Children accept new foods better when they see others are eating them.
- Communication improves with eating meals as a family.
- You are a role model for your child. Your child will be more likely to eat healthy foods when they see you eating.
- Turn off T.V., phones, tablets, radio during mealtime and focus on being together.



**GIFT #7:**

**Be Active.**

- Develop a family activity or play schedule and encourage children to be active and play every day. Go for walks, play games, dance, swim, play tag, jump, tumble, and anything else that is FUN and active!
- The 2018 Physical Activity Guidelines for Americans states:
  - Children ages 3 to 5 years should have at least 180 minutes of physical activity throughout the day (approximately 15 minutes every hour while awake).
  - Children ages 6-17 years should engage in 60 minutes of physical activity every day, vigorous-intensity, muscle-and bone-strengthening activities at least three days a week.

**STOP!**

**[Click here](#) to complete the survey and receive credit**



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