



Be a 'Green' Family

Tips for parents of young children to live environmentally-friendly

Special to California Kids

Turns out, it is easy being green. Parents and caregivers can teach children environmentally-friendly habits starting at an early age. However, the benefits of a healthy environment are not for Earth alone. Many 'green' choices have added health benefits for children and families, such as encouraging physical activity, eating fresh fruits and vegetables, and creating safer, toxin-free environments.

First 5 Sacramento offers families the following "Top 10" green tips to teach children to care for both their health and the health of the planet:

No Gushing While Brushing: Teach children to turn off the water while brushing their teeth during the two-minute brushing time dentists recommend.

Walk the Walk: Instead of taking the car, walk! By walking, you will not only help

cut down on pollution, but provide good exercise for you and your family.

Fresh Is Best: Go to a farmers market and teach your preschooler how to choose local seasonal produce for healthy snacks. A farmers market is eco-friendly because it offers fresh produce that has not traveled a long distance and isn't wrapped in a lot of packaging. Don't forget to bring a reusable bag to carry your groceries home!

Lights Out: Tell children to turn off the lights when leaving a room and help them open curtains and blinds to let in the sun's natural light during the day. Switching off lights helps conserve energy – and lower your home energy bill.

Recycle Over and Over: Teach your kids the value of recycling – newspapers, magazines and junk mail are just a start. You can even turn this into a fun activity like creating a newspaper and magazine photo collage.

Green Thumb, Here We Come: Most kids love to play in the dirt. Turn this into a fun gardening experience to grow plants

and herbs – all it takes is a small plant container. As an extra bonus, indoor plants help clean the air in your home.

Take a Hike: Play as a family outdoors. Throw a ball around, go for a hike or play tag instead of playing with electronic toys.

Think Artsy: Bring the artist in you to life and make crafts from objects you were planning to throw away. Make homemade wooden toys or create new outfits for your child's dolls from old clothes and linens.

Give Bottled Water the Boot: It is important for kids to drink plenty of water every day. To cut down on trash, refrain from buying bottled water. Instead, show your child how to fill up reusable bottles and thermoses with filtered tap water. An added value for children's teeth to prevent tooth decay is when the tap water is fluoridated. Visit the First 5 Sacramento website at www.First5Sacramento.net to check the fluoridation map and find out if your family lives in a fluoridated water district.

Turn Household Chores Into Playtime: Kids are natural scientists and love experi-

menting with things, so show them how to mix baking soda and vinegar to create a natural cleanser for your home. Not only will you replace unhealthy household toxins found in traditional cleaning supplies, but you will also turn a household chore into a fun activity for your child.

For more information on First 5 Sacramento and early childhood development programs, please visit the Parents Resource Center at www.First5Sacramento.net or call (916) 876-5865.

About First 5 Sacramento – Research shows that a child's brain develops most dramatically in the first five years and what parents and caregivers do during these years to support their child's growth will have a meaningful impact throughout life. Based on this research, California voters passed Proposition 10 in 1998, adding a 50 cents-per-pack tax on cigarettes to support programs for expectant parents and children ages zero to five. First 5 Sacramento distributes approximately \$16 million a year in Prop. 10 revenues to programs and services that meet local needs.



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