

## 5 wellness tips for Dads: Feel good all year round

Written by

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Keeping children healthy through the winter is a top priority for parents. Fathers playing an active role in their children's lives, including their health and safety, can make a positive difference. Dads, you can take several simple steps so colds and flu don't stop your kids and you from spending time together.

According to the National Responsible Fatherhood Clearinghouse (NRFC), setting a good example is the most important way to teach your children healthy behaviors. Even if you don't share a home with your children, following healthy habits when you are together encourages them to do the same.

Modeling healthy behaviors is key for any parent seeking to teach their children healthy habits and behaviors. For example, if your children see you washing your hands often, they likely will too. Step in at the sink to help the littlest ones wash thoroughly. Again, the earlier they experience this, the greater the chances that they will retain and continue these healthy practices. Once you are done, be sure to dry your hands completely after washing them. To prevent the spread of germs, cough or sneeze into your elbow so germs are not spread to your hands. Also, show your children how to turn their heads away from others and use and toss tissues properly. Be sure to exercise, eat foods that help you have a healthy weight and energy, and get proper rest. When your body is in good physical shape, is well rested, and has

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appropriate nutrition, it is better able to fight off germs and infections.

Taking care of your own health should not be limited to wintertime. It is a year-round process that is as important to your children as it is to you. Fathers can accompany their children on annual check-ups to help reinforce key health messages from the pediatrician. On occasion, children may accompany their fathers to their check-ups, too. Resources available on the NRFC website ([www.fatherhood.gov](http://www.fatherhood.gov)) confirm that healthy fathers are more available to emotionally and financially support their children and families.

To feel great and stay that way, you need to take into account more than just your physical health. Your psychological and social needs also have an impact on your overall well-being and your ability to be positively involved with your children.

**1. Psychological health** □ Life can get complicated and overwhelming. So being a loving, involved father isn't always easy. If you are depressed, are abusing drugs, or have other issues that affect your emotional and mental health, they can cause problems between you and your children. There are many support and treatment options available to help you get past the barriers that could be holding you back from a better relationship with your children.

**2. Physical health** – Exercise regularly. Find an activity that you enjoy so you are more likely to maintain a routine. When planning your workouts, discuss them with your children. Explain your exercise routine and how they can join in too. Set realistic workout goals. Be sure to balance your workouts with proper sleep.

**3. Dietary health** – Eat healthy foods in moderate amounts. Drink water and snack on fruits and vegetables. Discuss your diet with your children. When in the grocery store point out healthy choices. Read the labels on food items with your children and discuss nutrition information. You are what you eat, so be sure to encourage and model healthy eating habits for your children.

**4. Social health** □ How you conduct your adult relationships has a direct effect on your children. Studies show that people who enjoy healthy relationships have more happiness and less stress. If your relationships in the past were stormy or troubled, you can start now to undo attitudes and behaviors that might have contributed to an unsatisfying personal life. Dealing with past mistakes allows you to move forward by establishing positive, fulfilling relationships.

**5. Interpersonal health** □ Healthy interactions are often the most neglected component of well-being. Healthy relationships take time and effort. Look for ways to add laughter to your activities with your children. Make sure your children know and understand your values by living them every day. Focus on your successes and not what you consider to be your failures. Let your children know that it is OK to fail and that no matter what, you'll always love them.

Children need involved fathers in every aspect of their lives. Similarly, dads can take control of every aspect of their health. Show that you value your health and you'll be a positive role model for your children. Pass your healthy habits on to the next generation.

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Getting up-to-date, accurate information is a vital part of health and wellness. The NRFC offers practical tools and resources to help fathers build and maintain stronger connections with their children in every season. Visit [www.fatherhood.gov](http://www.fatherhood.gov) or call 877-4DAD411. Stay in touch with the NRFC on Facebook and Twitter.