



Preschool

HEALTH

PARENT CONVERSATION GUIDE

Health. In the preschool years, your child is growing and changing *quickly*. In this phase, it's especially important to keep in mind that every kid is different—your preschooler may learn and develop at a different rate than others. So don't get discouraged if your neighbor's two-year-old *adores* peas while your kid just shoves them up their nose. Continue to introduce healthy foods and habits over and over again. In the Preschool phase, your role is to . . .

Establish
BASIC NUTRITION



So your child will . . .
**HAVE CONSISTENT CARE AND
EXPERIENCE A VARIETY OF FOOD.**

This guide is designed to help you connect with your child in the phase they are in, by giving you some words to say to help them develop healthy habits. As the conversation progresses through the phases, always keep this end goal in mind for your kids:

HEALTHY HABITS

Learning to strengthen my body through exercise, nutrition, and self-advocacy.



IN THE NEW BABY PHASE, ASK THESE QUESTIONS . . .

"Can you tell me a few details about our family's medical history?"
(Ask your parents or a close relative.)

**"When should we schedule
our health appointments?"**

*(Make sure you stay current on
all your child's pediatric visits.)*

"How do I know if he is getting enough to eat?"
(Ask your pediatrician or pediatric nurse for some guidelines.)

IN THE FOLLOWING PRESCHOOL YEARS, SAY THINGS LIKE . . .

"Let's drink milk this time instead of juice."

"Today, we're going to see Doctor Mark!"

"Yum, let's try some green beans."

"Let's wash your hands. It keeps you from getting sick."



"Did you know carrots grow underground? Eating carrots help your eyes see better."

"Will you help me cook dinner tonight? You can stir!"

**"What's your favorite thing to do outside?
Swing? Play hopscotch? Kick a ball? Let's go
play outside together!"**

"Thank you for trying the peas. Let's try another new food soon!"

JUST REMEMBER

Every phase is a timeframe in a kid's life when you can leverage distinctive opportunities to influence their future. The preschool years are the wonder years. You can incite their wonder by exploring the world side-by-side with your child. Allow them to touch, see, smell, hear, and (whenever appropriate) taste any and all things that will help them better understand their growing and changing bodies.

It's Just A Phase . . . So Don't Miss It

To enhance the conversation, here are a few activities your family can try:

Toothbrush-ing – Teaching your child to be patient enough to thoroughly brush their teeth can be hard. Sing one of your child's favorite songs and challenge them to keep brushing until the song ends. (Try "Row, Row, Row Your Boat." If you do it enough, they will sing the song in their head as they get older; it builds a lifetime habit.)

Moving Music – Show your preschooler that exercise can be fun by turning on your favorite dance jams and moving and grooving without stopping for at least two songs.

Handwashing Helper – Combine glitter with lotion. Explain that the glitter represents germs that can make us feel yucky. Rub the mixture on their hands. Then, have them play with a few toys. Point out the glitter being transferred from surface to surface, just like germs. To close, run some warm, soapy water into a tub or bowl, allowing them to practice washing their hands and toys.

This guide is based on research from The Phase Project, a collaborative, ongoing effort, assembling classic and innovative research with practical application. To discover more ways to help your preschooler develop healthy habits, check out <http://PhaseGuides.com>.





HEALTH

PARENT CONVERSATION GUIDE



Health. In the elementary school years, your child’s concept of their bodies and health will continue to form. Their questions won’t stop—in fact, you can expect the frequency and the depth of their inquiries to increase. You’ll reinforce ideas you’ve already discussed and you’ll introduce other health basics that you’ll unpack over the next phases. But don’t worry—you don’t have to teach your kid everything *right now*. In the Elementary phase, your role is to . . .

Develop
POSITIVE ROUTINES



So your child will . . .
**ENJOY EATING WELL
AND EXERCISING OFTEN.**

This guide is designed to help you meet your elementary-age kid where they are now, giving you some words to say as you navigate the critical issue of health. As the conversation progresses through the phases, always keep this end goal in mind for your kids:

HEALTHY HABITS

Learning to strengthen my body through exercise, nutrition, and self-advocacy.



TO ELEMENTARY-AGE KIDS (K-3), SAY THINGS LIKE:

"I love watching you run/swim/ride your bike!"

"Did you wash your hands before dinner?"

"Let's drink some more water."

(Kids need five 8oz cups a day.)

"Will you rinse the blueberries?" *(Teach cooking basics.)*

"Let's play freeze Frisbee."

**"People have different body types
like they have different eye colors."**

*(Use positive words to describe
different body types.)*

"Do you see how much sodium is in this can?" *(Read food labels
and evaluate nutrition.)*

"The mayonnaise can't sit in the sun all day." *(Teach food safety.)*



TO ELEMENTARY-AGE KIDS (4-5), SAY THINGS LIKE:

"What have you heard about marijuana?" *(Begin talking about drugs and alcohol.)*

"Almonds have healthy fat that you need." *(Talk about wise food choices.)*

"Sometimes I wish magazines didn't touch up all the photos. We never see what those people really look like."

(Talk about body image.)

"What would you like for dinner this week?" *(Plan healthy meals.)*

JUST REMEMBER

Every phase is a timeframe in a kid's life when you can leverage distinctive opportunities to influence their future. The elementary years are the discovery years. You can provoke their discovery by encouraging their imaginations, allowing them to investigate without filling in all the blanks, and simply making yourself available for the many, many questions that will come.

It's Just A Phase . . . So Don't Miss It

To enhance the conversation, here are a few activities your family can try:

Family Kitchen – Choose a few nights a month to be “Family Kitchen” night. Using a cookbook that offers healthy recipes, take your kid(s) to the grocery store, check labels, and allow them to do as much of the “cooking” as possible. Talk about the importance of good choices and proper food preparation.

X-Ray – Grab some sheets of black construction paper and white chalk. Each of you trace your hand on a piece of paper, and draw the bones you can feel or see. Google how many bones there are in the human hand and talk about how awesome God made our hands and fingers. Talk about some of the ways you use your hands, and what are your favorite things to do with them (draw, pitch a baseball, write, grab the chin-up bar).

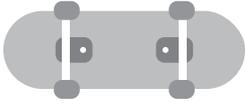
Simon Says, “Get Fit!” – Play a game of Simon Says, but instead of the normal commands, use fitness-related ones. For example: Shake your whole body, jump up and down, lay on your back and pedal like you’re on a bike, hop like a frog, pretend to sit in an invisible chair, etc. Ask them what are some other ways to get them moving and let them choose the activity next time.

This guide is based on research from The Phase Project, a collaborative, ongoing effort, assembling classic and innovative research with practical application. To discover more ways to help your elementary-age kid develop healthy habits, check out <http://PhaseGuides.com>.



**PARENT
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Middle School

HEALTH

PARENT CONVERSATION GUIDE

Health. We don't have to tell you that the Middle School phase is wrought with dramatic change. Changing friends. Changing schools. Changing hormone levels. And, yes, changing bodies. During these (sometimes-awkward) transitional years, it's more important than ever to help your middle schooler learn how to become responsible for their health. In the Middle School phase, your role is to . . .

Develop
POSITIVE ROUTINES



So your child will . . .
**VALUE THEIR CHANGING BODY
AND MAINTAIN GOOD HYGIENE.**

This guide is designed to help you connect with your middle school student in the phase they are in, giving you some words to say as you navigate the critical issue of health. As the conversation progresses through the phases, always keep this end goal in mind:

HEALTHY HABITS

Learning to strengthen my body through exercise, nutrition, and self-advocacy

TO SIXTH GRADERS, SAY THINGS LIKE:

“Don’t forget to wash with soap . . . and to put on deodorant after!”

“It’s normal to feel weird or awkward at this age—everyone feels that way.”

(Normalize puberty.)

“What would you like for dinner this week?” *(Let them help plan dinner and eat together whenever possible.)*

“Let’s go on a run together a couple of times a week.”

“When was the last time you drank some water?”

(Middle schoolers sometimes forget to hydrate.)

TO SEVENTH AND EIGHTH GRADERS, SAY THINGS LIKE:

“What do you know about anorexia, cutting, or protein supplements?” *(Talk about body image.)*

“I know you tried out for soccer but there might be other sports you are interested in. Do you have any others you’d like to try?” *(Help put failure into perspective.)*

"What are you learning in health class?"

"How can I help you feel less stressed?" *(Help them regulate their own emotional health.)*

"What do your friends say about alcohol? *(Talk about drugs and alcohol.)*

"It's time to turn it off and go to bed."

(Teens still need 9-11 hours of sleep.)

"These are my health goals for this year. What are some of yours? Are there any we can work on together?"

JUST REMEMBER

Every phase is a timeframe in a kid's life when you can leverage distinctive opportunities to influence their future. Middle school is the coming-of-age phase. You can provide stability in your child's ever-changing landscape by listening more than you talk, creating safe opportunities for them to experiment, and helping them create healthy community. This is the perfect time for you to reinforce the idea that you're a safe person to talk to and that you respect and affirm their personal journey.

It's Just A Phase . . . So Don't Miss It

To enhance the conversation, here are a few activities your family can try:

Draw Up a Sweat – Write out five or more exercises on separate slips of paper (burpees, situps, pushups, etc). Fold and place in a cup. Then write the numbers 10-20 on separate slips of paper, and place in another cup. Pick a silly word that if any family member says during the week, they are required to pick one slip of paper from each cup and do the exercise (ex: 10 jumping jacks, 15 squats). Whoever does the most exercises that week gets a prize. You may even want to let them come up with the next week's exercise motivation.

Taste Test – Grab a muffin tin, a blindfold, and several snacks (including a few healthy choices your child has never or rarely tried), and a score sheet. Place a portion of each snack in one section of the muffin tin. Have your middle schooler put on the blindfold and try each sample. On the score sheet, they have to describe how each snack tasted, and score them in order of most-to-least tasty. You can play along too and add some things you've never tried.

Family Adventure – As a family, write a dream list of adventurous or unique physical activities you want to do together: Hike to a scenic spot and have a picnic, go skydiving or take a dancing class, go rollerskating or to the golf driving range. Be on the look out for coupons and plan a half day once a month where you will commit to checking off one of those activities off your list.

Photo Flashback – Pull out photos of you as a middle schooler. Describe how awkward you may have felt or how differently you dressed. Talk about the things that seemed like a big deal then that aren't now that you're an adult. For fun, Google yearbook photos of famous people or look at photos from middle or high school of family members.

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High School

HEALTH

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Health. For some high schoolers, physical changes have slowed to an almost imperceptible rate. For others, they'll grow and develop more over these four years than the last. But overall, the most drastic changes for high schoolers are social and academic. With all the added pressure, it's not uncommon for a high schooler to develop stress and/or anxiety. Sleep, exercise, a balanced diet, and emotional support will become staples. In the High School phase, your role is to . . .

Encourage
**A HEALTHY
LIFESTYLE**



So your child will . . .

**SHARPEN THEIR PERSONAL AWARENESS AND
LEARN TO BALANCE DIET AND EXERCISE.**

This guide is designed to help you connect with your high school student, giving you some words to say as you navigate the critical issue of health. You're becoming more of a coach now than an active advisor, but your teenager still needs you to help guide them along the way. Some of these conversation starters will overlap or need to be repeated at different ages. But as the conversation progresses, always keep this end goal in mind:

HEALTHY HABITS

Learning to strengthen my body through exercise, nutrition, and self-advocacy.



TO HIGH SCHOOLERS, SAY THINGS LIKE . . .

"Sometimes you have to pause to see if you are feeling hungry, thirsty, tired, or anxious."

"You can't replace sleep with energy drinks."

"You can't do marching band, theatre, *and* run track this year. That's overcommitting."

"When you shave, shave in the direction the hair grows."

"Fast weight loss isn't really healthy."

"Would you be interested in talking to a counselor about that?"

"I know this year can be intense. Are you getting enough rest?"

"Why don't you take a study break and go on a walk."

"Can I make you some eggs before you head out?"

"I bought some trail mix and there's yogurt in the fridge."

"Let me know if you need help with your college applications."

"Let's have dinner this week—just you and me."

JUST REMEMBER

Every phase is a timeframe in a kid's life when you can leverage distinctive opportunities to influence their future. High schoolers may think that they no longer need your guidance, but that's not exactly true. What they need most right now is your *Trust*. This phase will be more about handing off healthcare responsibilities than directing them because you're preparing your teen for what's next. Mobilize your student's potential by listening, guiding, and encouraging their self-expression.

It's Just A Phase . . . So Don't Miss It

To enhance the conversation, here are a few activities your family can try:

Take a Hike – Once a week (or even once a month) encourage your family to go on a 10–20-minute walk or hike together. If needed, offer incentives like an extended curfew.

Adventure Challenge – Pick a physical activity your family enjoys doing together: Basketball, hiking, running, biking. Set one goal that aligns with your interests: shoot a 3 pointer at 20 different parks in one day, hike to 15 different waterfalls in one year, visit 10 National Parks, bike 5 new trails, run three 5Ks together, etc. Challenge yourselves to get fit in your favorite way and make some lasting memories.

Hand Over the Apron – Prepare your high schooler for the day when they will completely be on their own. Set them up for nutrition-success by letting them be in charge of dinner one night a week. Give them a set budget and suggest a healthy meal or two—but let them do the research, the coupon cutting, the shopping, and the cooking.

This guide is based on research from The Phase Project, a collaborative, ongoing effort, assembling classic and innovative research with practical application. To discover more ways to help your high schooler develop healthy habits, check out <http://PhaseGuides.com>.



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