

January 2019 – Role-Modeling Healthy Habits

Parents and caregivers... are you sending your children mixed messages about healthy living?

- Do you talk about the importance of eating a healthy breakfast before school, then rush out the door with only a coffee in hand?
- Do you talk about your weight and skip meals because you are on a diet?
- Do you encourage your children to choose water when thirsty but drink pop when you want a beverage?

Though you may not realize it, children watch the adults in their lives very closely. Being a positive role model and modeling healthy behaviours for your children will help them to develop healthy habits for life. Here are a few things you can do to lead by example:

- Follow Canada's food guide and eat a vegetable or fruit at every meal and snack, while limiting highly processed foods (like cookies, chips, processed meats and fruit drinks).
- Avoid saying you don't like a food. Children are constantly exploring the flavours of new foods. Talking positively about foods allows them to develop their own food preferences.
- Embrace that healthy bodies come in all shapes and sizes. Practice healthy behaviors (like eating well) to help you feel good, not for weight control.
- Accomplish a goal lately? Reward yourself with non-food items, like spending time with a friend, attending an art class or reading a new book.
- Participate in physical activity for the lifelong health benefits, the pleasure of moving your body, or because you enjoy the sport, rather than to justify a food treat afterwards.
- Focus on fun! Plan celebrations around activities you enjoy, instead of the foods you want to eat.
- Turn off your phone and be present during meals.
- Be open to trying new foods. Try making a new recipe together, like this lentil salad:

Zesty Rice and Lentil Salad

Makes six servings

Ingredients:

1 cup	uncooked brown rice	1 can (19 oz.)	green or brown lentils, drained and rinsed
2 cups	water		
2 whole	lemons, all zest and juice	1 whole	bell pepper (red, yellow or orange), diced
1 Tbsp	fresh ginger, grated		
1 tsp	Dijon mustard	2 cups	kale, chopped
½ tsp	black pepper	1 whole	apple or pear, cored and diced

Directions:

1. Cook brown rice according to package directions (usually 1 cup rice to 2 cups water).
2. In small bowl, whisk together the lemon zest, lemon juice, ginger, Dijon mustard and pepper to make a dressing.

3. Add lentils, cooked rice, bell pepper, kale and apple or pear to a large mixing bowl and gently stir to combine.
4. Pour dressing over salad and gently stir to combine. Chill before serving, if desired.

Adapted from the Niagara Region You're the Chef program and available in the [Region of Waterloo Healthy Eating Recipe Book](#).

Brought to you by Region of Waterloo Public Health and Emergency Services.