

Improving Your Children’s Health

3 ways to take a proactive approach

FAMILY FEATURES

As a sign of the times, Millennial moms continue to lean toward proactive and preventative care when it comes to the health of their babies.

A survey of more than 300 moms in the United States from Evivo baby probiotic revealed more than half approach their children’s health with a proactive mindset. They are more likely to conduct their own research before visiting their pediatrician (more than 80 percent), and also inquire about particular ways they can improve the overall health of their children, even if they are not sick.

These tips can help you advocate for and improve the overall health of your baby:

Schedule regular well-visits

Although paying close attention to your baby’s appetite, activity level and general condition can provide ample information about his or her health, it can’t rule out every possible concern. That’s why the American Academy of Pediatrics recommends parents schedule regular wellness visits during the first six months of a child’s life and beyond. During these visits, physicians can monitor for problems that may not be readily visible and they are also an opportunity for parents to ask questions. In addition to age-appropriate visits to the pediatrician, it’s also a good idea to begin preventive eye and dental care at an early age.

Be proactive about gut health

The first six months of life are a critical time to focus on gut health. Remember to pay attention to the bacteria living in the gut as it pertains to the development of the immune system. Research from the University of California, Davis shows the critical strain *B. infantis*, which is known to naturally protect baby’s gut from bad bacteria, is missing in nine of 10 U.S. babies today. When the strain is not present in the infant gut, it allows potentially harmful bacteria to thrive, which are linked to higher risk of colic, eczema, allergies, asthma, diabetes and obesity.

“The connection between rising autoimmune conditions and early immune health is becoming stronger with research about *B. infantis* and its impact on the infant gut microbiome, which makes the first six months of life a critical window to be proactive about gut health and restore *B. infantis*,” said Dr. Tanya Altmann, a pediatrician and best-selling nutrition author.



Photo courtesy of Getty Images

Thirty-seven percent of moms said they give their child a probiotic to encourage good health. Parents can promote immune health with an option like Evivo, which is the only baby probiotic clinically proven to restore *B. infantis* to natural levels. To learn more, visit evivo.com.

Incorporate plant-based foods for optimal nutrition

Breastfeeding is a significant first step in making sure your baby is getting all the nutrients he or she needs. Once you start feeding your child solids, it’s also important to introduce a wide variety of foods with high

fiber, including fruits, veggies, beans and whole grains. According to the survey, parents today are focusing on whole foods to provide nutrients, as 47 percent of moms said they’re incorporating more plant-based foods into their family’s diets and 31 percent are eating more organic. If you have a picky eater, it can get tricky to get him or her to eat more fruits, veggies and whole grains on a regular basis, but an option like smoothies can be a simple way to pack in the nutrients.

There are many actions parents can take to promote healthy lifestyles for their children, but focusing on gut health and nutrition in the early months of their lives can be a good place to start.

Gov. Bryant signs first-in-the-nation foster care reform

MS Center for Public Policy

Gov. Phil Bryant has signed legislation that creates a first-in-the-nation tax credit for targeted

investments in Mississippi’s foster care system.

Sponsored by Rep. Mark Baker (R-Brandon), The Children’s Promise Act (HB 1613)

will provide concrete assistance to nonprofit organizations working on diverse problems around the state, including human trafficking, opioid addiction, and autism.

Dr. Jameson Taylor, Vice President for Policy with the Mississippi Center for Public Policy explains why this legislation is so important: “No one person or entity has all the answers when it comes to foster care. This tax credit will crowd-

source the solutions by inviting new donors to support the development of much-needed services to children and families in crisis.”

According to the National Council of Nonprofits, tax incentives for charitable giving generate as much as a 5 to 1 return. Some of the Mississippi nonprofits eligible for this credit receive no government money, meaning that every child they divert from foster care saves money for the state.

One of these is Baptist Children’s Village. Others, like Canopy Children’s Solutions, are leveraging modest grants into multimillion dollar savings for the state. In addition, these nonprofits are generating significant long-term savings by helping to break cycles of abuse, poverty and welfare dependency.

“Due to changes in federal funding, foster care providers are being forced to reorient their services,” said Taylor. “Some of them are closing certain facilities, others are facing closure altogether. The Children’s Promise Act creates an innovative funding model that will help foster care nonprofits proactively work with the Department of Child Protection Services (CPS) to continue to address the challenges raised by the Olivia Y lawsuit.”

In 2018, the legislature passed a \$1 million tax credit for individual donations made to nonprofits working with foster care kids, disabled children, and low-income families. This program was based on a successful model in Arizona. HB 1613 expands this individual credit to \$3 million. The Children’s Promise Act also cre-

ates a \$5 million business tax credit targeted toward nonprofits working directly with CPS. Mississippi is the first state in the country to enact a business tax credit for donations to foster care providers.

“This new law will encourage game-changing investments in foster care,” concluded Taylor. “Mississippi is continuing to lead the way in transforming

lives and communities by passing best-in-the-nation welfare reform and, then, empowering the private sector to work alongside government in addressing generational poverty.”

The Children’s Promise Act is endorsed by the Mississippi Center for Public Policy, the Mississippi Association of Child Care Agencies, and the Governor’s Faith Advisory Council.

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