

GENERATION STRONG

Peer-Reviewed Research for Families



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Produced by: **Dr. Jackson Taylor**

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WHAT YOU EAT SHAPES HOW YOUR CHILDREN EAT

Parental food behaviors are among the most powerful predictors of a child's lifelong dietary habits

PUBLISHED	SCOPE	STUDY TYPE	POPULATION
March 2021 Nutrients Journal	82 Studies Reviewed	Narrative Review	Children & parents globally

KEY FINDINGS

Across dozens of studies, parental dietary behaviors consistently shaped children's eating habits regardless of gender, age, socioeconomic status, or country. Family meals emerged as the single most influential setting – moments of modeling, connection, and structured eating. The two most effective parenting practices were role modeling (eating foods you want your child to eat) and moderate restriction. Overly controlling feeding was associated with worse outcomes.

FOR YOUR FAMILY

The Takeaway: You are your child's most powerful teacher – not their school, not the internet. Eating vegetables yourself, sitting down to regular family meals, and avoiding overly rigid food rules are the highest-leverage actions available. The research suggests that gentle modeling beats pressure every time. A child who sees their parent enjoy a variety of whole foods is far more likely to build those habits themselves.

82

Studies all pointed to the same conclusion:

Parents are the #1 influence on what their children eat – more than schools, peers, or media combined.

*Source: Nutrients Journal
March 2021 – 82-Study
narrative Review*

RESISTANCE TRAINING IS SAFE, NECESSARY AND BENEFICIAL FOR KIDS

The American Academy of Pediatrics confirms: strength training belongs in childhood – for athletes and non-athletes alike.

PUBLISHED	SCOPE	STUDY TYPE	POPULATION
June 2020 – Pediatrics (AAP)	Comprehensive literature review	Policy Review & Evidence Summary	Children & adolescents

KEY FINDINGS

This official AAP review confirms that resistance training is safe and beneficial when properly supervised. Today's youth are experiencing measurable declines in muscular fitness compared to previous generations – driven by inactivity and excess body weight. Properly designed resistance training improves strength, bone density, cardiovascular risk factors, body composition, and mental health in children and teens. The evidence does not support the myth that it stunts growth. Both athletes and non-athletes benefit.

FOR YOUR FAMILY

The Takeaway: If your child is asking to start lifting weights or join a strength program, the answer from pediatric medicine is: yes, with proper guidance. Bodyweight exercises (push-ups, squats, lunges), resistance bands, and supervised gym programs are all appropriate. The focus should be on technique and consistency over heavy loads – especially valuable for kids who aren't playing sports.

↓ 15%

Today's children are significantly less fit than their parents were at the same age.

Muscular fitness in youth has declined measurably over the past two generations – and supervised resistance training directly reverses this trend.

Source: Pediatrics (AAP), June 2020 – comprehensive literature review

SWAPPING SUGAR FOR ZERO-CALORIE SWEETENERS DOES REDUCE WEIGHT

A large meta-analysis clarifies when artificial sweeteners help – and when they don't.

PUBLISHED	SCOPE	STUDY TYPE	POPULATION
July 2020 – Obesity Reviews	2,914 participants across 20 studies	Systematic Review & Meta-Analysis	Overweight & obese adults (min. 4 weeks per study)

KEY FINDINGS

When people directly replaced sugar with non-nutritive sweeteners (NNS) like stevia, sucralose, or aspartame, they experienced meaningful reductions in body weight and BMI – particularly those who were overweight or obese and not following a calorie-restricted diet. When NNS were compared to water or placebo (no sugar replaced), the benefit disappeared. The effect is specifically about the substitution – not a magic ingredient in the sweeteners themselves.

FOR YOUR FAMILY

The Takeaway: If your family regularly drinks sweetened beverages or eats sugary foods, swapping to a zero-calorie version can genuinely support weight management. The key word is swap, not add. Drinking a diet soda alongside a sugary snack won't help. This effect is strongest when the rest of the diet isn't already tightly restricted.

2,914 People across 20 studies confirmed it: directly swapping sugar for a zero-calorie alternative leads to real weight reduction – but only when you're actually replacing something, not adding it on top.

Source: Obesity Reviews, July 2020 – systematic review & meta-analysis

WALKING MORE – EVEN WITHOUT FORMAL EXERCISE – CHANGES YOUR HEALTH

Adding daily movement outside the gym significantly amplified health outcomes beyond exercise alone.

PUBLISHED	SCOPE	STUDY TYPE	POPULATION
October 2021 – Medicine & Science in Sports & Exercise	45 obese adults	Randomized Controlled Trial	Obese adults – 6 month duration

KEY FINDINGS

Obese adults were assigned to supervised aerobic exercise only, aerobic exercise plus an extra ~3,000 daily steps (tracked by Fitbit), or a control group. Among compliant participants, the group adding daily steps saw significantly greater reductions in waist circumference, body fat, blood glucose, and insulin – improvements the exercise-only group did not achieve. Daily steps alone accounted for 21–26% of the variation in weight and fat loss results.

FOR YOUR FAMILY

The Takeaway: Structured workouts matter, but what your family does between workouts matters just as much. An extra 3,000 steps is roughly 25–30 minutes of casual walking – a family walk after dinner, parking farther away, or taking the stairs consistently. For kids and adults alike, reducing sedentary time stacks on top of formal exercise in measurable, meaningful ways.

3,000

That's all it took.

Adding just 3,000 steps per day – about a 25-minute family walk – produced greater fat loss, smaller waistlines, and better blood sugar than structured exercise alone.

Source: Medicine & Science in Sports & Exercise, October 2021 – 6-month RCT, n=45

RESISTANCE BANDS BEAT VITAMIN D FOR FIGHTING OXIDATIVE STRESS

Elastic resistance training outperformed supplementation alone in protecting the body from cellular damage.

PUBLISHED	SCOPE	STUDY TYPE	POPULATION
April 2022 – European Journal of Clinical Nutrition	40 healthy men	Randomized Controlled Trial	Adult men with mildly low Vitamin D – 8 week duration

KEY FINDINGS

Forty men with mildly low vitamin D were split into four groups: exercise + Vitamin D, exercise + placebo, Vitamin D only, and a control group. Those who did elastic band resistance training three times per week showed significantly improved antioxidant enzymes (SOD, GPX) and reduced markers of cellular damage – regardless of whether they took vitamin D. Adding the supplement on top of exercise produced no additional benefit. The training alone was the driver.

FOR YOUR FAMILY

The Takeaway: Before spending money on antioxidant supplements, prioritize consistent movement. Even resistance bands – inexpensive and usable at home – provide measurable protection against oxidative stress. For adults in your household who aren't exercising regularly, a simple band routine 3x per week is more impactful than a supplement cabinet full of Vitamin D.

8 wks

That's how long it took

for resistance bands – used just 3x per week – to measurably improve the body's cellular defense system. No supplements required. No gym membership needed.

Source: European Journal of Clinical Nutrition, April 2022 – 8-week RCT, n=40

Welcome to the Generation Strong Journal



Dr. Jackson Taylor, PT, DPT
Executive Director

This is Volume 1 of the Generation Strong Journal — and I couldn't be more excited to get it to you. Every month, we go straight to the peer-reviewed research so you don't have to. No trends, no opinions, no guesswork. In a world where everyone has advice about how to build a healthy family, we're going to give you something better: evidence. Welcome to the family.

This issue's five studies all pointed toward the same theme: the environment you create at home matters more than any single intervention. Whether it's how you eat at the table, whether your kids see you move, or whether you take a walk after dinner — these daily choices compound quietly and powerfully.

Of everything in this issue, the research on parental food modeling hit closest to home for me. Eighty-two studies looked at this question from every angle — and every single one came back to the same place: you. Not the school cafeteria. Not social media. You. That's a lot of responsibility, but it's also a tremendous gift. The single highest-leverage thing you can do for your child's health doesn't cost a dollar — it just requires you to lead by example.

About Generation Strong

Generation Strong exists for one reason: to empower families today so they can leave a legacy of health for generations to come. We educate, inspire, and guide families toward stronger lives through fitness, nutrition, and community — because we believe the habits built inside your home today will echo far beyond it.

This journal is one part of that mission. Each month, we take the best available research and turn it into something you can actually use — no wellness noise, no conflicting opinions, just clear, evidence-based guidance for the families who are ready to lead.



EDUCATION

Hundreds of educational videos on strength, nutrition, and health — and much more.



TRAINING

Comprehensive training programs built for every fitness level, so no one gets left behind."



COMMUNITY

Resources, Q&As, and everything your family needs to stay on track. All at generationstrong.org

Until next month – keep training, keep modeling, and keep showing up.

Dr. Jackson Taylor

Executive Director & Editor – Generation Strong