



DR. CLAUDIA ANRIG

BECAUSE EVERY CHIROPRACTOR NEEDS A HAND.

## The Wellness Child Lifestyle, Part 1

---

by Claudia Anrig, DC

One of the objectives of the family practice is to provide advice to parents and their children on how to improve lifestyle habits. Look at the lifestyle habits of the average North American family; it may appear from the surface that this family is healthy. But look closer; you may well find that the parents have adopted poor lifestyle habits, which directly transfer to the overall wellness of their children.

Where did these habits originate? While it is obvious that most parents develop their lifestyle habits from childhood experiences and the influences along the way from their peers, a growing and somewhat "stealth" influence on families is the "Western culture" of living. Parents feel left out or "out of style" if they can't consume and participate to the highest level. Thus, many choose a lifestyle characterized by things that are easy, convenient, disposable, drive-through, microwaveable, and electronically stimulating for them and their children. This lifestyle also reflects the attempt to always squeeze one more item into an already busy and stressful life.

What can an average family day look like? Morning hours often start with children getting up earlier than they should to prepare for early day care, school drop-offs, or a long commute. Last-minute wake-ups, with the stress of having to "hurry up," often means skipping a healthy breakfast.

Speaking of breakfast, there is a much higher incidence these days of children eating on the way to school: a granola bar, soda or the quick drive-through Starbucks mocha drink. Gone is the calm sit-down breakfast with the balance of protein and whole grains. If you are a teen, you are even less likely to have breakfast and will wait to grab a snack item at school.

Overloaded backpacks, once only seen on college and high-school campuses, are now seen on the backs and developmental spines of young children. As parents prepare diligently every fall for their children to return to school and shop for backpacks, looks (i.e. Scooby Doo) win out over the better/safer packs. Remember, child/teen backpacks should not exceed 15 percent of the child's weight.

Lunchtime? A healthy lunch (if using the unhealthy food triangle) is heavily swayed toward refined carbohydrates, with macaroni and cheese, pizza, and hamburgers on top of the food chain. Many schools choose cost savings and taste over healthy options. Cafeteria lunches are often not prepared at the campus kitchen, but instead are warmed up, because the meals are pre-packed and processed. Fresh fruit is now replaced with canned or frozen sliced fruits that often contain a sugary base.

The average sack lunch is usually not any better. Parents select the convenience of pre-packaged items, believing this is best for their kids. Parents have accepted that household names like Kraft only have the best intentions for their children. So, when the busy parent is thinking about what they should pack for their child, they reach for packaged lunches (i.e., Lunchables) or items that take very little work (fruit drink, cheese sticks, chips and

cookies).

The hours of 2:00 p.m. to 7:00 p.m. used to be a time when children came home, had a healthy snack, finished homework, and went out to play until it got dark. This has been replaced by after-school or day-care programs that keep a watchful eye on children until 5:30 p.m., extending an already long day. Parents might select after-school activities (sports, music, dance) to fill up the afternoon and early evening for their children, as they race around town to keep up with their busy schedules.

Some kids do come home after school, but rather than participate in a healthy activity as a part of their late afternoon, they hit the couch or bedroom for hours of television, video or computer games. This life of inactivity is not healthy for the body or mind.

Whether it's after-school day care or the busy race around town for afterschool programs, children young and old are coming home late in the day or in the early evening, only to race off to finish their homework late into the night. Dinners, which used to be the one time that the entire family would sit down all together and spend time together at the end of the day, has now been replaced by drive-through windows or take-out. Many families have a loose dinner policy - grab as you go, nuke the item, and sit back down in front of the television.

So, when you think about why children being raised in a society with so many advantages are so unhealthy, you just have to look at how families spend their time. If the lifestyle of the family is busy compacting everything we believe is important, this leads to poor nutrition, lack of healthy rest, and overstimulated and stressed-out children. An unhealthy, stressful lifestyle cannot be in the best interests of children or their parents.

Why should a family chiropractor care about all this? Because we are the first-line health care providers of families in our community, and we need to address those issues that may interfere with the overall wellness of children.

If the wellness-minded chiropractor acknowledges that there are three causes that may lead to vertebral subluxation - physical, chemical and mental/emotional - then it is the responsibility of the family chiropractor to address the lifestyle habits of families and how they can be improved.

*Author's note:* Part 2 of this article will provide suggestions on how to start families on the journey toward healthier eating and living.

This article has been provided as a courtesy by [www.drclaudiaanrig.com](http://www.drclaudiaanrig.com)