



## "An Apple a Day is Not Enough" - a Poem by Taylor Mali

An apple a day is not enough.  
Don't let me start preaching,  
But shouldn't the children of the country that's the wealthiest,  
Also be the children of the country that's the healthiest?

That makes sense, you'd think that would be true,  
I know I would. I'm just saying. Wouldn't you?  
But that's not the case with our kids these days.  
Kids' health is declining in all kinds of ways.

We need to improve it. We can and we will.  
But it starts with thinking of health as a skill.  
A 21st century skill that you practice.  
Practice makes perfect.  
The unhealthy can't hack this.

We've got to teach our kids by example every day,  
And it's tough because people stop listening when they think they know what you're going to say.  
Like, drink more water.  
Eat more vegetables (especially the dark leafy green ones).  
Eat less sugar.  
Don't drink soda (especially the sugary caffeine ones).  
Stop watching TV. Go play outside. Go for a run, or a walk, or a bike ride.  
Get your heart rate up every day of the week.  
Chew your food more, eat slower, meditate, sit still, get your heart rate lower.

Set yourself a health goal. It doesn't have to be wild.  
It takes a lot of things to raise a healthy child.  
And healthy kids do better in school.  
They have better jobs. They lead better lives.  
They marry healthier husbands and healthier wives.

Good health is a skill and teachers need to teach it.  
Now you've got me preaching so I might as well preach it.  
Health is not a one-semester class you take in middle school.  
It should be a part of every subject, not the exception but the rule.

Learn about good health in math, in English, and in social studies.  
Work on a project about nutrition in science with your buddies.  
And parents need to be involved too. Teachers can't do this alone.  
Good health starts at home.

We need to own this issue because the stakes are high.  
What does it matter if we try to increase our scores in math and reading,  
If scores are dying before their time because they got fatter and fatter.  
Healthy students make wealthy earners not to mention better learners.



The choices you make every day have the biggest impact in the biggest of ways.  
Check it: why else would they say -- an apple a day keeps the doctor away.  
But new solutions to old problems: that's the American way!  
Who cares about keeping the water clean and pure?  
There isn't a problem if they can't sell you the cure.

Don't keep looking for new technology to be your medical savior.  
Of course it's easier to be saved by a miracle than it is to change your behavior.  
So we need to value health education the way we value math and reading.  
We can't keep feeding our children the same old lessons like junk food full of saturated fat, and sugar and chemicals. We can do better than that.

We can and we will and that's the truth.  
Because the future... the future belongs to the healthy youth. Amen.