

Feeding the Brain - Success at School Start with Healthy Eating

It's a fact - children who eat nutritious food do better at school. Here are a few tips to make healthy eating part of your back to school routine.

Get organized: A little planning goes a long way - make lunches the night before, cut up vegetables for an easy after-school snack, or grab something out of the freezer for tomorrow's dinner.

Start the day off right: Eating first thing in the morning kick starts the brain and helps children be more alert during the school day. Free up time to eat in the morning by putting the toaster on the counter, pulling out the cereal, and setting the table the night before. Tired of cereal and toast? Try poached eggs and cheese on a whole wheat English muffin, oatmeal topped with walnuts and strawberries, or a yogurt, granola and fruit parfait.

Involve kids in lunch: Involve kids when planning, preparing and packing lunches. The more pride your child has in his lunch, the more likely he is to eat it! Lunches with high protein foods like beans, nuts or meat keep kids full and help them concentrate throughout the afternoon. Include foods from each of the four food groups to provide balance. Here are a few quick and healthy lunch ideas:

- **Wrap it up-** grab a whole grain tortilla and any extras from last night's dinner such as cold chicken or roast beef and your child's favorite veggies, cheese and hummus or guacamole.
- **Dunk a lunch** –try pita triangles, carrot, cucumber or red pepper sticks and bean dip. Finish off the meal with cut up fruit and yogurt.

For more lunch ideas and recipes check out: <http://www.interiorhealth.ca/YourHealth/SchoolHealth/SchoolNutrition>

Offer healthy snacks: Children are often hungry when they arrive home from school. Having an after-school snack prepped and ready for your child helps them make a healthy choice and gives you a little time to get dinner on the table. Try offering fresh fruit or cut up veggies and dip. Nut butters, whole grain crackers, cubes of cheese and yogurt also make healthy snacks. Add fresh or frozen fruit to a pitcher of water for a refreshing thirst quenching after school drink.

Eat together whenever and where ever you can: Preparing, cooking, and eating meals together provides time to connect. Children who eat with their families once a day perform and behave better at school. Meal time is a great time for parents to model healthy food choices and to “check in” with kids. It is also a great time to chat about another exciting school year!

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Date: Sept 17, 2013