

APPENDIX F

Nutrition Tips for School Newsletters

1. Parents and teachers are the most influential role models for children. **Let your kids see you eating healthy!** Take a look at your eating habits; is it time you made some changes for you and your kids?
2. Kids who **eat breakfast** have better academic performance in school as well as have better moods, more energy and tend to eat better throughout the rest of the day. Ideas for quick healthy breakfasts to have (even while walking to school) include a piece of fruit, healthy muffin, bagel, toast, cheese, yogurt etc. Stock your freezer with sliced whole wheat bread, bagels, homemade healthy muffins, multigrain waffles so you can easily grab one when you're in a hurry.
3. Kids who are involved in grocery shopping and meal preparation are 20% more likely to choose whole grains and more fruits and vegetables. Let your kids help you plan the meals, grocery shop and prepare meals and baking. They can stir, add ingredients, fill muffin cups, recognize items you buy on the grocery store shelves etc. You'll be amazed at what they can do and learn with a little nutritional guidance.
4. The Canada Food Guide is a great tool to help you and your kids develop healthy eating habits and make healthier food choices. It explains getting a balance and variety of foods from the 4 food groups while giving suggestions for healthy food choices and examples of serving sizes. Pick a copy up at the health unit and put it on your fridge for easy reference. While meal planning, your kids can help you choose a food from each food group to make a balanced meal.
5. About 30-60% of kids do not get enough calcium in their diet needed for the optimal development of bones and teeth. Dairy products such as milk and yogurt are the best sources of calcium. The high consumption of juice and soft drinks is the major reason why kids don't get enough. Try to serve a dairy product with each meal, send yogurt in school lunches, have cereal and milk or hot chocolate as a snack. Bake and cook with milk. If your kids don't like milk or have lactose intolerance there are many ways to still get the dairy products in and enough calcium.
6. Kids only need 1 serving of juice a day; that's ½ cup only! If kids drink a lot of juice, then it competes with their intake of milk (thus less calcium intake) and fills them up making it less likely that they will get the variety of other foods and nutrients they need throughout the day. Try diluting all juices with water. Encourage kids to eat whole fruits so they get the fibre and other nutrients the fruit contains. Offer milk or water instead if they're thirsty.
7. More on juice! Topping the nutrient chart for juice is orange juice and the booby prize goes to apple. When purchasing juice, look for 100% pure juice with no sugar added. Don't be fooled by labels with wording such as 'juice blends, nectars, cocktails, contains real juice – these will mostly contain water and sugar and very little real juice.

8. Yogurt is a great source of calcium, protein and needed bacteria for a healthy digestive system. It can be a snack, part of a meal, used in baking and dips etc. Yogurts vary in percentages of milk fat added sugar and flavorings. Your best bet is to choose plain with no added sugar and then add your own flavorings such as fresh chopped fruit, orange juice, cereal etc. If you like the flavored yogurt, mix it half and half with the plain to decrease the amount of sugar. Get some little Tupperware containers and sent it to school. Although the packaging is fun, try to avoid the Minigo yogurts and yogurt tubes as they contain a lot more sugar.
9. Cavities and tooth decay is on the rise in kids. Part of the reason is the increased intake of pop, candy and **fruit leathers!** Fruit leathers are a good healthy choice for a snack or dessert by because they are so sticky and have concentrated natural sugars, the sugars stick to the teeth. If your kids do eat fruit leather, serve them at a time when they can brush their teeth right after. Cheese is one of the best things to eat when you can't brush your teeth immediately after a meal (a good choice for school lunches!)
10. Trust and positive reinforcement work better than fear and punishment when trying to facilitate healthy eating habits in kids (eg; don't scold kids for not eating all their lunch or threaten them if they don't eat all their veggies). Use non-judgmental comments such as "you weren't very hungry today, you didn't eat much of your lunch or did you not like it?? Kids are not "bad" or "good" because they did or didn't eat all of a meal. Trust your kids to eat the amount that they need. You can facilitate this by providing nutritious food they like in small portions to not overwhelm them – they can always ask for more.
11. I'm sure you've all heard it on the radio the "5-10 servings a day of fruit and vegetables"~ it's true and well worth repeating again here. Stock your fridge with easy to grab veggie sticks and fresh fruit; make yogurt dips for the fruit and veggies or even pudding for fruit dipping. Eliminate some of the competition (eg; pop, candy and cookies) from your cupboards.
12. All foods fit into a healthy diet yes, even the pops and chips, just not very often. Work with the 80/20 rule which suggests trying to eat healthy food choices 80% of the time and allowing the treats up to 20% of the time. If we label food as bad and good it takes the enjoyment from eating and adds guilt. If you forbid your kids to have it then they will start sneaking it and wanting more of it. If you provide some treats every now and again along with balanced meals, they will be enjoyed and your kids will have a healthier attitude towards food.
13. Mealtime atmosphere is as important as the food being served. Mealtimes should be an enjoyable family time vs. a battle ground for what is and what is not being eaten or served. Just make sure you have at least one item on the table that your kids are familiar with and like. Once the meal is on the table, the focus should be on family matters. If you have picky eaters or kids saying they are not hungry or they don't like it etc. just acknowledge what has been said and move on to a different conversation – you'd be amazed at how after a little while you may turn to find that child eating their dinner. Your calm attitude will help too. Even if you only get one family meal a day or every few days, do what you can to make it enjoyable eg; music, fun placemats or napkins, colourful plates etc.

14. In Canada one third of boys and one quarter of girls are overweight, an increase of 5% since the 1980's. Overweight kids are targets for school bullies and have increased risk for obesity and the numerous related health problems. TV, video, computer and not enough exercise are key causes. Two thirds of kids do not meet the activity guidelines for optimal growth and development, let alone for good fitness levels. Kids need activity and a healthy diet. Parents are the most powerful influence and kids are more likely to be active if you do it as a family. Emphasize fun and approach exercise with a positive attitude vs. it being a chore.

15. Take care of your kids and your environment with a healthy diet. Foods as close to their natural state as possible contain more nutrients and less additives. Packaged foods tend to contain more preservatives and wasteful packaging that can become litter. Aim to serve whole, more natural foods and send them in lunches in reusable containers. Get your kids to help choose the containers so they think they are 'neat' and will bring them home from school. It might help keep the litter off the school grounds and streets too.