

Healthy School Lunches

- Back-to-school is a great time to step back and see if your child is getting the food she needs to achieve peak performance. And Dr. Andrea Bull, ND has information, tips and insight to help you give your child nutritious “brain food” to help them with school success.
- Fruits and vegetables, along with a whole foods diet, have been shown to increase immune function—which means less sick days at school. This diet also has been shown to increase athletic performance, focus and concentration, and decreases the exacerbation of chronic diseases, like asthma. So when choosing meals and snacks for your children, let fruits, vegetables and whole foods be your guide.
- A large part of the obesity problem stems from children eating foods like sodas, refined foods, processed foods, junk foods and fried foods. These foods are low in nutrients and high sugars and in calories – which pack on the pounds. Lack of exercise is another major factor to be considered in children’s obesity.

The key to changing children's diets is to change the options of food they can choose from on a daily basis

- One method is to start by changing the snacks that they are accustomed to eating. Remove the junk foods from their lunches and in between meal and replace them with healthier options.
- If you stop bringing snacks and junk food in the house they will create the habit of eating better with the food is in the house. Fruits and vegetables are great snacks for children especially in the wake of the obesity epidemic that our country is facing.

Here are some suggestions on how to get your children to eat more fruits and vegetables:

- Cut up fruits into bit size pieces and put them on a tray or in containers where they have access to see them and eat them.
- Vegetables, carrot sticks, snap peas or zucchini sticks can be a wonderful snack by having a tasty salsa or yogurt dip with cinnamon or other spices.
- If your children like pizzas or quesadillas then use whole wheat tortillas with hummus, lettuce, carrots, tomatoes, or bell peppers tucked inside.
- Smoothies go over well for breakfast time as well as snack time, children love to be able to pick the fruits that you will use to make your snack.
- Finally children mimic what their parents eat if they see you eating more fruits and vegetables they will too.
- Do you want your child to be introduced to a new type of bread?
Try using different bread together 1 slice of wholegrain and 1 slice of rye.
- Make your own nut-free trail mix using sunflower seeds, pumpkin seeds and dried fruit.

After School:

- Designate one shelf of the refrigerator and/or pantry as the "snack shelf," with the understanding that anything that's on that shelf is okay to eat without having to ask permission first. Make sure to include variety on the snack shelf--at least one thing from each food group.
- Fruit Bowl Rule: a designated bowl of fruit on your kitchen table or counter that you keep stocked. The understanding is that the children must eat once piece of fruit out of the fruit bowl before going to the cupboard or pantry for and packaged snacks.

Creating new healthy eating patterns will help them to lose weight because whole foods have fiber, protein and healthy fats that fill the stomach and cause satiety for the child. In three months time, your child will have more energy and weigh less, because they are consuming more nutrients and less calories over time.

You will be happy and your child will be healthy. Everyone wins!

For help on more specifics for your child consult a Naturopathic Physician.