

Smart food for smart kids: good food choices keep kids focused at school

Written by Holyoke Enterprise

You want your kids to have proper nutrition, and feed them foods that will keep them healthy and energized. What your child eats throughout the day, starting at breakfast, can affect their test-taking skills, focus and performance in school. Is your child eating the right foods to keep them performing at their best?

Just like adults, kids need carbohydrates, protein, fat, vitamins and minerals—only in different amounts based on where they are in growth and development. The amount of nutrients needed depends on the age and gender of the child. Eating organic is also a good way to avoid harmful herbicides and pesticides.

Kids should always start off their day with a nutritious meal. Studies have shown that kids who eat breakfast perform better in school, have more focus and less behavioral issues.

According to Stephani Waldron-Trapp, ND, naturopathic practitioner at Northwestern Health Sciences University's Natural Care Center in Bloomington, Minn., it is really important for kids to eat breakfast within a half hour of waking up in the morning. "They should have some sort of protein—eggs, meat, bean dish or oatmeal with legumes." Waldron-Trapp also emphasizes the benefits of fish oil supplements which encourage brain function.

There are a variety of nutritious snacks that will give your kid the nutrition to keep them energized and focused throughout the day. Waldron-Trapp recommends a snack with protein and simple carbohydrates every two to three hours. Some healthy snacks for kids include a banana with almond butter, celery stalks with almond butter and raisins, a handful of nuts, fresh fruit, avocado sliced on crackers, plain yogurt and hummus on crackers or vegetables.

Nutritious meals benefit kids in many ways. So what can you do to get your kids into healthy eating habits? According to Waldron-Trapp, there are many things you can do to encourage healthy eating habits in your kids.

—Have regular family meals. These meals are more likely to be nutritious and kids are less likely to snack on unhealthy foods. "Serve a meal with a half a plate of vegetables, a quarter plate of protein and a quarter plate of whole grain," says Waldron-Trapp.

Smart food for smart kids: good food choices keep kids focused at school

Written by Holyoke Enterprise

—Serve a variety of healthy foods and snacks. Instead of large portions, serve a variety of small portions. Waldron-Trapp encourages eating protein-rich meals every 2-3 hours.

—Lead by example. Eat healthy yourself.

—Avoid battles over food. Provide a variety of healthy choices and let your child choose to eat what they like. This allows your child to feel like they are in control, when really you are offering nutritious choices that are healthy for them. “Would you like an apple or a pear?”

—Involve kids in the process. Have them help pick meals, grocery shop, and help to cook. Waldron-Trapp recommends using a nutrition cook book for kids. “Deceptively Delicious” by Jessica Seinfeld focuses on pureeing foods and putting them into recipes. It is especially good for picky eaters. Waldron-Trapp also recommends “Feeding the Whole Family” by Cynthia Lair.

—So, keep your refrigerator stocked with healthy choices because nutritious eating habits are important for your child’s growth and development. It’s important to help them eat right to keep them energized, focused and performing at their best.