

Smilematters

PATIENT FACT SHEET

Healthy Eating + Physical Activity = Healthy Children + Improved Academic Performance

In a growing trend, parents and even schools are looking at ways to teach children good eating habits that will benefit them (and their teeth!) for a lifetime.

Schools are turning away from soda pop vending machines and replacing them with healthier alternatives such as flavored milk, water, 100 percent fruit juices, and seltzer water. Schools are also filling snack vending machines with healthy, lower-fat alternatives such as popcorn, pretzels, nuts, cheese and crackers, fruit, and yogurt.

Studies have shown that children who take part in breakfast programs and other nutritional meal plans show increased test scores, improved attendance records, better class participation, and reduced tardiness. Studies have also shown that physical activity in adolescents relates consistently to higher self-esteem and lower anxiety and stress, which in turn is associated with better academic performance.

Most children in America do not get enough physical activity and do not consume a balanced diet. Snacks tend to be high in sugar and fat content. Poor nutrition, lack of physical activity, and obesity in children can lead the way for medical complications such as high cholesterol, high blood pressure, gallbladder disease, osteoarthritis and joint problems, asthma, diabetes, depression, anxiety, and even sleep apnea. Poor nutrition and the consumption of large amounts of sugary foods and drinks also pave the way for cavities and gum disease.

What Can You Do?

Limit your child's access to sugary drinks.

Healthy Snack Options!

Stock up on such healthy snacks as bagels and cream cheese, yogurt, nuts, trail mix, cheese and crackers, fresh fruit, string cheese, 100% fruit juice, pretzels, baked chips, milk, water, seltzer water, and veggies.

Great After-School Recipes for Kids

Yogurt Parfait

2 cups low-fat yogurt
1 cup chopped fresh, canned or frozen fruit
1 cup low-fat granola

Layer equal amounts into four cups and share with friends!

Peanut Butter Roll Up

Spread peanut butter on a tortilla, sprinkle with your favorite nut or sunflower seeds. Roll up and enjoy!

Provide your child with healthy snacks and limit the number of snacks.

Ensure that your child brushes and flosses regularly and visits the dentist twice a year.

Ask your school what kind of snacks and drinks are provided and encourage them to offer healthy alternatives.

Make sure your child gets adequate exercise.

Make sure your child has a healthy breakfast to start the day right.

Set a positive example yourself!