

Back-to-school with Nutrient-Rich Foods for Successful Kids

Want to raise happy, healthy, and successful children? Young children need the right fuel for growing, learning, and developing. This means foods and beverage with plenty of nutrients (protein, fiber, vitamins, minerals, etc.) and not too many calories, fats, or sugars. The secret to feeding a healthy family is to serve delicious nutrient-rich foods at every meal and snack. When children fill up on the right stuff - high quality nutrition for their bodies and brains, they will naturally have less room for the nutrient-poor choices (soft drinks, chips, candy, and desserts). Here are some quick, easy ways to serve children high-octane choices from every food group - morning, noon, and night.

Whole grain foods with carbohydrates, fiber, B-vitamins, and more

Since the 2005 *Dietary Guidelines for Americans* focused on the nutritional benefits of whole grains, there has been an explosion of new options on grocery shelves. The key is to choose products that list whole grains as the first ingredient or two on the label. There are whole grain cereals for breakfast, the kid-friendly, “white” whole wheat bread for lunchtime sandwiches, crunchy whole grain crackers for snacks, and lots of truly delicious whole grain pastas for dinner.

Fruits and vegetables with antioxidants, vitamins A and C, potassium, and fiber

You can't go wrong with produce, especially with fresh items from local farms. All types of fruits and veggies count - fresh, frozen, canned, dried, and 100% juice - and eating more of them matters, for kids and adults. At breakfast, enjoy fresh or frozen berries on cereal, slices of melon, or a glass of 100% OJ; at lunch, go with crunchy baby carrots or sliced apples; for dinner, make brightly colored veggies (broccoli, corn, sliced peppers, or frozen peas) the center of every plate.

Low-fat dairy foods with protein, calcium, potassium, magnesium, and phosphorus

The nutrients in this group are biggies for kids - and, sadly, most young people in America are not getting enough calcium or potassium. Fortunately, it's easy to get the 3-A-Day dairy servings that children and teens need. It's as easy as an 8-ounce glass of milk with breakfast, lunch, and dinner. It's as easy as yogurt parfaits for breakfast or after-school snacks. It's as easy as string cheese for on-the-go energy anytime of day. When it comes to nutrient-rich dairy food, it's just easy!

Lean meat, poultry, fish, eggs, beans and nuts with protein, iron, zinc, and B-vitamins

Whether you are talking growing muscles or active brains, these nutrients top the list for all children. Getting enough protein at every meal and snack helps with extending satiety (feeling comfortably satisfied after eating). While most kids get plenty of protein foods at lunch and dinner, breakfasts and snacks can be a bit skimpy on protein. At breakfast, try eggs, sliced deli meats, bean burritos, or last night's leftovers. Great snack proteins include nuts, jerky, and more leftovers.

Want information about getting children to eat more NUTRIENT-RICH FOODS? Getting smart foods onto children's plates and into their mouths really is easier than we sometimes think. At www.mypyramid.gov/, you can listen to podcasts about simple steps toward healthier eating, explore inside *MyPyramid* to find out how to get more nutrition for your calories, and go to *MyPyramid for Kids* with games, coloring sheets, and lots of helpful family tips.