

## **Nutrition**

### **WHY IS BREAKFAST SO IMPORTANT?**

We know that breakfast readies children to learn. Students require essential nutrients and energy to concentrate on and accomplish tasks. Breakfast provides these nutritional requirements and eliminates "transient hunger", also known as occasional hunger. All children and adults experience transient hunger symptoms such as headache, fatigue, sleepiness and restlessness. Adults have learned compensating behaviors to overcome transient hunger; children have not yet developed this ability. Young children often do not recognize that they are hungry and just complain of a "tummy ache". When students do not compensate for feelings of hunger their classroom performance is affected.

### **NO TIME? TIRED OF CEREAL?**

Prepare breakfast the evening before.

Leftovers from the night before make a nutritious A.M. snack.

Dinner foods are perfectly OK to be eaten in the morning.

Try foods that are quickly prepared and easily carried in throw-away containers: yogurt, canned pudding, hard boiled eggs, slices of cheese, crackers, celery, an apple, raisins, nuts, dried fruits, or even last night's pizza would be yummy.

### **WHEN STUDENTS DO EAT BREAKFAST THEY MAY:**

Spend more time on tasks

Score higher on their achievement tests

Require less disciplinary intervention

Miss less school due to illness

Attend class more due to fewer trips to the nurses office

**REMEMBER:** Students need to replenish those lost stores of calories and nutrients. They need to feel "energized" and ready for each new day of learning. Remember, healthy children learn better!

### **LUNCH TIPS**

Lunch is an important time for children to replenish their energy for the afternoon. If your child chooses to bring lunch, here are some suggestions to maximize the meal.

- Get your child involved. Allowing children to prepare their own lunches, piques their interest and they are more likely to eat their own creations. Have your child make the lunch the evening before while you have time to help guide portions and choices. You can set the parameters by providing choices of food items that are high in

nutrition density, such as whole grain breads instead of white bread and greens such as spinach leaves and romaine lettuce rather than iceberg lettuce.

- Respect your child's eating style and preferences. Some children feel most comfortable with the same food day in and out, while others thrive on variety. It is what your child consumes in variety of food groups over a whole week of meals and snacks that is important...not just the lunch meal.
- Let your child pick out their own lunch box and consider insulated lunch bags with room for freezer packs so food items that require refrigeration can be safely brought to school.
- Buy reusable or recycle small food containers for cut fruit, veggies, dips and salads.
- Remember that lunch periods are 30 minutes long. Make sure food items are user friendly and do not take a long time to open, peel, prepare.

### **LUNCH SUGGESTIONS**

- Sandwiches made with lean meat, light tuna, peanut butter and jelly. You can add extra nutrition to sandwiches by adding shredded carrots, chopped celery, water chestnuts or even raw spinach leaves instead of lettuce. Peanut butter sandwiches taste great with slices of banana or apple.
- Whole grain tortilla wraps can contain all of the above plus chopped veggies, cheese, and other chopped low fat meats.
- Egg salad or chicken salad with a whole grain bagel and fresh fruit
- 8 oz low fat yogurt, whole wheat crackers with fruit
- ½ cup cottage cheese or hummus, whole grain crackers and fruit or veggies
- Bean based soup or stew in a thermos with whole grain roll and dried fruit.
- 1-2 slices of left-over pizza with fruit or veggies.
- Two hard boiled eggs , carrot sticks, whole grain roll, and fruit.

### **BEVERAGES**

- Low-fat milk, 100% fruit juices, and water are the best beverages – in that order.

- Milk (or soy milk, or lactose free substitute) is very important since children are building calcium reserves until they are in their late teens. Children, 9 yrs and under need 3 8 oz glasses of milk every day (or an equivalent 3 cups of yogurt). Try low fat/low sugar chocolate milk for a treat. If your child refuses to drink milk at school, make sure their juices are 100% pure fruit, with out added syrups or sugars. Make sure they are fortified with calcium and Vitamin D.

Flavored sports beverages and “vitamin waters” are not a great option as they are packed with sugar which decreases the appetite for nutritious foods and add empty calories.