

March 2018–Snack Attack!

I'm starving! When your child bursts through the door after school or day care, she/he is probably hungry. The struggle is to come up with healthy snacks that will give them the energy they need to play and to do homework.

1) Cafeteria plan: Students are often hungry after school because they don't eat their lunch. Cafeteria meals are healthier than ever because of new national nutrition standards but not everybody likes the same things. The cafeteria menu is posted on the school website. Parents and students should look at the menu at the beginning of the month and circle the days that a student should pack their lunch.

2) Stock the kitchen: The food that is in the house is what your youngster will eat; so shop with that in mind. Fruits and vegetables in different colors create variety. Veggie sticks (carrots, celery) go better with dip but make sure you are offering a low calorie option. Popcorn can be a healthy snack if you buy popcorn to air-pop instead of the microwave versions. Students will have a say in what they eat, but they will be choosing only from healthy foods.

* One more tip on healthy shopping is to shop the perimeter of the store first instead of going down each aisle. The outside aisles are where you will find the fresh produce, healthy dairy products (milk, yogurt and cheese) and fresh meats, chicken and fish. If you fill your cart from the outside aisles and then the middle aisles, you will have a healthier cart.

3) Have a mini-meal: Breakfast or lunch foods can make a good snack. You could serve oatmeal with raisins and nuts or put scramble eggs into a pita pocket or a tortilla. Whole-wheat English muffins with a little pizza sauce, shredded low-fat mozzarella cheese and vegetables (sliced mushrooms, chopped onions) and bake until the cheese melts will make a healthier version of mini-pizzas.

4) Build your own: If a child is allowed to get creative in the kitchen, they will be more likely to eat the results. Kebabs can be made by threading fruit and low fat cheese cubes onto toothpicks. Sandwiches can be cut into fun shapes using cookie cutters. Peanut or almond butter can be used as a dip for apples or spread it on bread and let them decorate with raisins or nuts.

Research shows that students with poor nutrition have shorter attention spans and do not do as well on tests. Students need good nutrition to help them be their best in both mind and body.