



Make Health a Choice in 2009!

Volume 1, Issue 6

January, 2009

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Why Bother With Breakfast?

If breakfast is the most important meal of the day, why is the first meal for many adults and students at lunch time? Let's face it, getting everyone fed and dressed in the morning can be time consuming enough without the added task of preparing breakfast. It's easier to skip breakfast, get out the door and wait for lunch. Why should someone bother with breakfast? "Breakfast is a great way to give the body the refueling it needs. Kids who eat breakfast tend to eat healthier overall and are more likely to participate in physical activities – two great ways to help maintain a healthy weight" (KidsHealth, 2009). When kids arrive

at school, they are expected to pay attention, perform academically, participate in class or small group discussions, and have enough energy until lunch. "Skipping breakfast can make kids feel tired, restless, or irritable. Their mood and energy can drop by mid-morning if they don't eat at least a small morning meal" (KidsHealth, 2009). If your child is thinking about lunch, he or she is not retaining lesson material he or she might otherwise master. More importantly, breakfast "kick-starts the body's metabolism, and when the metabolism gets moving, the body starts burning calories" (KidsHealth, 2009).



"How you feed your 'big kid' now can inspire healthy eating habits for a lifetime."

(WebMD, 2009)

It may be tough to fuel up in the morning but once your child's body acquires a morning boost, you will see remarkable benefits, making the extra step well worth the effort.

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Special points of interest:

- ◆ *When food is the reward.*
- ◆ *It's easy to grab the wrong snacks when you're hungry!*
- ◆ *Heavy backpacks.*
- ◆ *Who needs breakfast?*
- ◆ *The effects of caffeine.*
- ◆ *Grab & Eat ideas.*
- ◆ *Sedentary activity versus exercise.*

The Importance of Exercise

Treadmills, weights, elliptical machines and stationary bikes are what most adults think of when they think of exercise. "But for kids, exercise means playing and being physically active. Kids exercise when they have gym class at school, soccer practice, or dance class. They're also exercising when

they're at recess, riding bikes, or playing tag" (KidsHealth, 2009). The Kaiser Family Foundation estimates that the average child spends 5.5 hours daily on combined media technology which often means inactivity (KidsHealth, 2009). The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) and the Department of Health

and Human Services (HHS) recommends children get "at least 60 minutes of moderate to vigorous exercise on most, preferably all, days of the week. In addition, kids are encouraged to eat more fruits, vegetables, and whole grains" (KidsHealth, 2009).

Food Rewards

You've created a nice meal consisting of grilled chicken, rice and green beans. Your child moves his fork around the plate but acts disinterested. With good intentions, you promise your child dessert if she will eat dinner. Oops! Dessert has just become the main reason for eating healthy foods. "When dessert is the prize for eating dinner, kids naturally place more value on the cupcake



Add a little cheese to broccoli to make it extra special.

than the broccoli" (KidsHealth, 2009).

When children perform well in sports, make good grades or act in a way that makes you proud, food is often the first thought (hamburger, ice-cream, cake, cookies, pizza, hot dogs). The lesson we demonstrate to our children is that certain foods are more pleasant because they're "reward foods." Unfortunately,

these same foods are usually high in calories and low in nutritional value. Worse, in the future food rewards may cause "kids to start using food to cope with stress or other emotions" (KidsHealth, 2009).

There are other things we can do to demonstrate how much we love or how proud we are of our child. "Buy your child a book or small toy instead of an ice-cream cone when you want to show them you're pleased" (WebMD, 2009). Playing games, riding bikes and taking a walk are also rewards kids crave from adults when enjoyed together.

Hefty Backpacks

Books, pencils, journals, and other school supplies often fill up our child's backpack. Alone, these items are light but together the weight may add up to a hefty sum.

"According to a recent report by doctor's at Johns Hopkins University in Baltimore, Maryland, backpacks are a weighty problem for some students" (Education World, 2009). Overloaded backpacks or shoulder bags are leading to more complaints from students including tingling hands, back pain, and

80 pounds divided by 8 = 10 pounds

muscle spasms. Dr. Jane Benson recommends the following:

- *Bags need well-padded straps.
- *A bag with multiple compartments makes weight distribution easier.
- * Place heavier items near the top. "That way, the legs are carrying most of the weight" (Education

World, 2009).

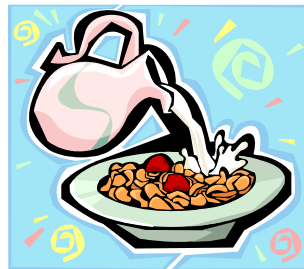
*Put the backpack on the scale! "Never carry a backpack that weighs more than 20 percent of your body weight" (Education World, 2009).

Experts have created a memorable rhyme to be used as a guideline for figuring out the ideal backpack weight. "Take your weight and divide by eight" (Education World, 2009).

A Brain Power Breakfast

Breakfast is a great way to start the day but the kind of breakfast kids eat is just as important. "Toaster pastries and some breakfast bars are portable, easy, and appealing but have no more nutritional value than a candy bar and are high in sugar and calories" (KidsHealth, 2009). Preparing for breakfast the night before can help younger children look out for themselves. Fruit

can be set out or cut and stored in the refrigerator overnight. Individual boxed cereals served with low-fat milk are a fast, healthy alternative because the size of the box makes preparation manageable. If your child would prefer eating in the car, "fresh



The most important meal of the day.

fruit, cereal, nuts, or half a peanut butter and banana sandwich are nutritious, easy to make, and easy for kids to take along"

(KidsHealth, 2009).

Snack Attack!

Let's face it, for many Americans a potato chip is a wonderful thing – a whole bag is even better. As we get older, we realize the need to eat foods with good, nutritional value and the importance of making healthy choices. Foods we deem as “forbidden” often make them more appealing; instead, make these foods occasional so your child doesn't feel he is miss-



“A good snack should take more time to eat than it does to prepare!”

(KidsHealth, 2009)

ing out on a good thing. Take your child along to the grocery store and spend time reading nutrition fact labels and comparing snacks and other food products (KidsHealth, 2009). Discuss portion sizes and look for snacks that are “low in sugar, fat, and salt” (KidsHealth, 2009).

When your child understands why we choose healthy foods, she will begin to think about

foods in a new light. “Being involved in the process makes it more likely that your child will learn to make healthy food choices” (KidsHealth, 2009).

Like adults, when children come home hungry, they are more “likely to take the path of least resistance,” making unhealthy snack choices (KidsHealth, 2009). For quick energy boosts, keep nutritious snacks around that are easy to grab. Nuts, fruits (dried or fresh), carrot sticks, and whole-grain mini muffins are a few foods that make snack grabbing healthy and quick.

Children and Caffeine

Caffeine is a stimulant that affects the central nervous system. “At lower levels, it can make people feel more alert and energetic”

(KidsHealth, 2009). However, too much caffeine can have the opposite effect, leading to nervousness, headaches, stomachaches, difficulty concentrating, sleeplessness, an increased heart rate and high blood pressure (KidsHealth, 2009).

Caffeinated beverages do not contain the same value as milk and

children who drink caffeinated beverages throughout the day may not be getting the calcium they need. High sugar beverages may “lead to dental cavities from the high sugar content and the erosion of tooth enamel from acidity” (KidsHealth, 2009). Beverages, such as milk, contain the calcium children need.

Caffeine is also a diuretic, causing the body to “eliminate water, which may contribute to dehydration” (KidsHealth, 2009). Although

“Consuming one 12-ounce sweetened soft drink per day increases a child's risk of obesity by 60%.”
(KidsHealth, 2009)

caffeine is synonymous with sodas, caffeine may also be found in over-the-counter medicines, tea, chocolate, and even ice cream. Toss aside the “caffeinated waste lands” and reach for milk or water.

Out of Ideas?

When we think of breakfast, we often think of common foods like cereal and toast. “The morning meal doesn't have to be all about traditional breakfast items. You can mix it up to include different healthy foods, even the leftovers from last night's dinner, and still provide the nutrients and energy kids need for the day” (KidsHealth, 2009). Here are a few breakfast ideas from KidsHealth that include carbohydrates,

protein, and fiber:

- *Top whole-grain cereal with fruit along with a cup of yogurt.
- *Top hot cereal with cinnamon or nutmeg.
- *Breakfast smoothies (fruit, milk and bran).
- *Eat a vegetable omelet, served with orange juice.



“Don't forget how important your good example is.”
(KidsHealth, 2009)

- *Eat a bran muffin and yogurt topped with berries.
- *Heat leftover rice. Add chopped apples, nuts, and cinnamon.
- *Add cream cheese or fresh fruit to a bagel.
- *Fill a wheat tortilla with vegetables, eggs, cheese or a combination.

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Promoting social &
emotional fitness for kids.

Daphne Morris, M.Ed., met Trevor Romain in 1992 when he visited a school as a guest speaker. Impressed by Trevor's profound and meaningful impact on students, Daphne joined The Trevor Romain Company in 2006. A former elementary school principal, Daphne holds two Master's degrees in education.

January Q&A

Q: My child is not interested in sports but enjoys watching TV and playing video games. How do I encourage physical activity without making exercise sound like a chore?

Today's parents did not have many of the technological advances that children have available in this generation. Children need limits on television and the internet so they can participate in other activities. Video companies are attempting to make games more interactive but not all are structured for physical movement. The American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP) recommends that children 2 years and older should be limited to no more than 1 to 2 hours of *quality programming* a day (KidsHealth, 2009). Inactivity should not last for periods longer than two hours (KidsHealth, 2009). By setting guidelines and time limits, children are aware that they must participate in other activities. Shooting basketball hoops, taking a walk, riding a bike, running, caring for a pet, washing the car, and playing chase are physical activities most children enjoy. Help make exercise a habit by "establishing a regular schedule for physical activity" (KidsHealth, 2009). Like many habits, once established it's hard to live without them. Physical activity is invigorating and quickly becomes appealing once you get the *ball rolling*.

Resources:

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