

Eat Smart Be Smart

WHAT KIDS NEED TO KNOW

Emphasize food as it relates to life today.

You will lose kids' attention faster than they can say "osteoporosis" if too much emphasis is placed on how proper nutrition prevents disease. If you succeed in reaching them with the good nutrition message today, their tomorrows will likely be healthier too.

Remind children that healthful food promotes achievement. In school or on the playing field, kids who eat well perform better and achieve higher levels of mastery. A nutritious diet fuels the body for learning, growth, sports and play.

Well-nourished kids look better, too! Children who eat a balanced diet have eyes that sparkle, skin that glows and bodies that are fit and energetic.

A fun way to introduce this concept is to use the "Food gives me energy..." sheet on page 8. This activity helps children make the connection between healthful eating and how it gives them the energy needed to participate in enjoyable activities.

The message of good nutrition is summed up in the *Dietary Guidelines for Americans*.

Adults and kids over the age of two are advised to aim for fitness through regular physical activity and moderate eating; balance their diets by eating from a wide selection of foods, emphasizing whole grains, fruits, vegetables, lean protein and low-fat dairy foods; and to choose sensibly by moderating the amount of fat, sugar and sodium they eat.

Two important practical tools for meeting these guidelines are the *MyPyramid* food guide and the *Nutrition Facts* food label.

Teach children to refuel their bodies!

Because of their smaller stomach capacity and tremendous energy needs, kids require frequent meals and snacks. Behavior problems at times are merely the result of an empty stomach.

Breakfast is the meal most directly connected to school achievement. Kids who skip breakfast have shorter attention spans, do poorly in tasks requiring concentration and even score lower on standard achievement tests.

Somehow, "snacking" has taken on a negative connotation in our society, perhaps because it is often linked with low-nutrient foods. Done right, snacks can and do make a big contribution to daily nutrition. Healthful snacks should mirror meals – emphasizing healthful foods, but in smaller quantities.

Young bodies need to move!

Nutrition studies show that the current epidemic of childhood obesity stems from both inactivity and overeating. An intricate balance exists between food and physical activity. A nutrition unit will be decidedly lacking if it fails to present the exercise part of the equation. Kids enjoy learning about nutrition when it is presented from a fitness perspective. Physical fitness should also be part of the daily classroom routine, especially in schools that limit PE to once or twice weekly.

Media literacy should be a part of every child's education.

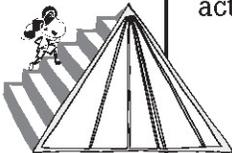
If children are to resist the allure of the media, advertisements and other societal influences, they must learn to identify the intent of the messages.

Source: *How to Teach Nutrition to Kids*, pages 26–29

Source: This is a page from the *Nutrition Fun with Brocc & Roll Book*, by Connie Liakos Evers (24 Carrot Press, 2007).

Available at <http://www.nutritionforkids.com>

MyPyramid WHAT KIDS NEED TO EAT EACH DAY*

FOOD GROUP	AMOUNT NEEDED EACH DAY	EXAMPLES & SERVING SIZES	GO EASY ON:
Grains 	5 to 7 ounces (more if you are extra active)	1 ounce is approximately: 1 slice of bread; 1 cup of dry cereal; 1/2 cup of rice, pasta or cooked cereal; 3 cups of popcorn; 1 small tortilla; 7 round crackers	Refined grains; choose mostly whole grains
Vegetables	1-1/2 to 2-1/2 cups	1 cup cooked or chopped vegetables; 2 cups salad greens is considered 1 cup from the vegetable group	High-fat salad dressings, butter added to cooked vegetables and fried vegetables such as French fries
Fruits	1-1/2 cups	1 cup of fruit or 8 ounces of 100% juice Also equal to 1 cup of fruit: 1 small apple; 1 large banana; 1 large orange; 32 grapes; 1/2 cup dried fruit	Fruit with added sugar
Milk	2 cups (up to age 8) 3 cups (age 9 & older)	1 cup of milk or yogurt or 1-1/2 ounces of cheese	High-fat cheeses and high-sugar dairy desserts
Meat & Beans	4 to 6 ounces total of meat or meat equivalents	1 ounce lean meat, chicken or fish; 1/4 cup beans; 1 egg; 1 tablespoon of peanut butter; 1/2 ounce (about 2 tablespoons) of shelled sunflower seeds or nuts	High-fat meats

Limit "Extra" foods such as candy, chocolate, cookies, sweetened drinks and fried chips to one to two servings on most days.

*These are general guidelines for a child's daily food intake. For a more personalized approach, visit MyPyramid.gov. The MyPyramid site also provides more detailed information on serving sizes.

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Source: Nutrition Fun with Brocc & Roll, by Connie Liakos Evers (24 Carrot Press, 2007). Available at <http://www.nutritionforkids.com>