



Fuel Their Minds

Ideas for Better Eating and Active Play with Young Children



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Don't Skip Out on Breakfast

Mornings are no doubt one of the busiest parts of the day. Through all the morning chaos, first instinct is to skip out on breakfast, but eating a healthy breakfast should be a top priority. Research shows that when a child's nutritional needs are met, they have more energy to learn and achieve.

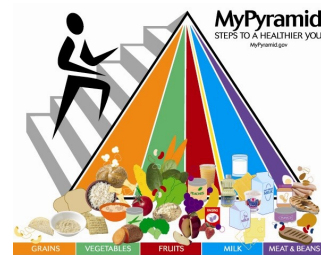
Taking 10 to 15 minutes in the morning to sit down and enjoy a healthy breakfast will give you an opportunity to organize your day and spend time with your children. This valuable time will not only be beneficial to you but will help build your child's social skills, self confidence, and their table manners.

A healthy breakfast does not have to be a burden. Here are some quick ideas to help start the day:

- ♦ Whole wheat toast with a tablespoon of spread such as peanut butter or fruit jam.
- ♦ Low-sugar cereals with nonfat or low-fat milk.
- ♦ Cooked cereal like oatmeal, cream of wheat, or grits.
- ♦ A fresh or frozen fruit smoothie with yogurt and 100% fruit juice (juice should be limited to 6 ounces or less per day).



- ♦ A lower sugar yogurt with a topping such as: dry cereal, cut-up fresh or frozen fruit, and chopped nuts.
- ♦ Scrambled eggs with leftover vegetables with a small amount of grated cheese. This can all be put into a warm corn tortilla then rolled up to make a breakfast burrito.
- ♦ Fresh fruit with a small amount of cottage cheese.
- ♦ Bananas with peanut butter.
- ♦ Whole grain waffles topped with a scoop of strawberries or blueberries.
- ♦ Pumpkin pancakes with fresh orange slices on the side.



Use MyPyramid as a guide for healthy eating and choosing a variety of foods. Don't hesitate to introduce new foods to children as it may take up to 15 different exposures before they start to accept that new food.

To find out more information regarding the daily nutrition recommendations for preschool or school aged children visit www.mypyramid.gov. There are many resources available that will encourage your children to develop healthy eating habits at an early age.

Handy Portion Guidelines

Offering appropriate portion sizes to children will help to encourage that they do not eat too much. Large amounts of food on a plate tend to make children eat more, even if they are not hungry for it. Always encourage children to use hunger as a guide, and respect that they should stop eating when they are no longer hungry. Overeating is one of the leading reasons children become overweight. Here are a few measuring techniques that have proven themselves to be very “handy.”



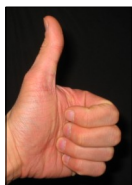
A FIST = 1 CUP

Offer one cup of grains, such as cereal, rice, or pasta. This is about the size of a closed fist.



A PALM = 3 OUNCES

A three ounce serving of meat, fish, poultry, or any other type of meat is approximately the size of a palm (minus fingers and thumb). This is about how much a young child needs all day of meat and beans.



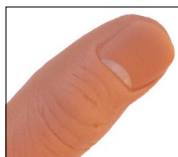
A THUMB = 1 OUNCE

Offer a piece of cheese the size of your thumb.



A HANDFUL = ONE OUNCE OF SNACK FOOD

For dense snacks, such as granola or trail mix, one handful is about an ounce. For a little lighter snack such as pretzels or crackers, two handfuls is about one ounce.



A THUMB TIP = 1 TEASPOON

Use one teaspoon of peanut butter, mayonnaise, syrup, or other spreads. Three teaspoons equal one tablespoon.

Article adapted from Campbell's Nourishing News

French Toast Kebabs

Do you need a quick idea for a healthy and fun breakfast? Here is a breakfast idea where the children can help create their own masterpiece while eating whole grains and fruit.

Ingredients:

- ◆ 8 large eggs
- ◆ 2/3 cup nonfat milk
- ◆ Salt
- ◆ 1/4 teaspoon vanilla extract
- ◆ 1 loaf whole wheat bread
- ◆ Cooking spray, any variety
- ◆ 2 cups fresh berries, any variety
- ◆ 2 bananas
- ◆ 12 skewers



Recipe adapted from MarthaStewart.com

Instructions:

1. Wash your and your child's hands.
2. Preheat the oven to 250°F. Place a cookie sheet in the oven to warm.
3. In a large bowl, have your child whisk together the eggs, milk, a pinch of salt, and vanilla.
4. Using a butter knife, have your child cut bread slices into 1" cubes.
5. Place in the egg mixture until coated.
6. Coat large skillet with cooking spray and turn heat to medium. Place coated bread pieces into the skillet. Cook and turn often with a spatula, until all sides are brown. To keep cooked bread pieces warm, transfer to baking sheet inside oven until all pieces of bread are cooked.
7. While you brown the bread, have your child cut bananas into small slices and place in a bowl.
8. Put berries in a separate bowl, then place all fruit on the table.
9. Allow children to assemble their kebabs.

using Media Wisely

TOO MUCH “SCREEN TIME”

Children are exposed to a lot of media; television, computers, cell phones, video games, and any number of portable gaming devices. The time they spend using these items is called “screen time”. Spending over 4 hours a day is not uncommon for children...but it should be! Taking the time to create rules regarding media is crucial to the best outcomes for children. Too much “screen time” may lead to excess weight gain, poor eating habits, problems with concentration, poorer reading skills, as well as violent and disruptive behaviors.



It is recommended that children under 2 should not watch television. If you have several children in your care, create a play space away from the TV for your younger children. A suggestion would be to only allow the TV to be on when your infants or toddlers are napping.

Children older than 2 should limit their media time to one hour per day. Make it a rule that they must ask you before they watch TV or play on the computer, so you can monitor total “screen time”.

Begin to reduce the amount of “screen time” by offering other fun, and self-directed, activities throughout the day. Spend a few days adding up how much time your children spend on media activities. Chances are it is too much. TV is often used as the “electronic babysitter”. Instead, when you need a few child-free minutes, try setting up an obstacle course to keep them occupied. Are stress levels getting too high and you just need a break? Take everyone on a neighborhood letter hunt. Trying to quiet down older children while the younger ones nap? Make a cozy reading corner with books from your local library.

TYPES OF SHOWS



It is not only the amount of time spent in front of a screen, it is also how they choose to spend their time. There is no doubt that educational programming can be beneficial. Children who watch Sesame Street, and other appropriately paced educational preschool shows, are often better prepared to enter kindergarten. It is very important to know what your child is watching, and to put strict limits on which shows are and are not allowed.

Programs that allow for interaction are good. There are programs where the child is encouraged to actively participate or where the characters seem to talk directly to the child. These types of programs allow them to process and apply what they are learning, and keeps them engaged, preventing the child from “zoning out”.

Programs and video games that are not over stimulating are good. Too much noise, too many graphics, too fast of a story can all lead to difficulty in paying attention to other things that are not so fast paced... which is everything else in life.

Programs and video games that *teach* are good. If the child is going to spend time in front of a screen, why not make it something that will help them in school and life?

Programs and video games that include any type of violence are not good, even cartoon violence or the nightly news. Children will grow up thinking that their environment is dangerous. Also, children who watch a lot of violence on TV are more likely to be violent themselves. They may not always have nightmares or monsters under their bed, but these shows and games are frightening to young minds. Check the television rating to be sure it is appropriate for your child to watch.

Programs that include characters who misbehave are not good. Children model behaviors from their favorite television character. If the favorite character is talking back, not obeying rules, and treating others disrespectfully the child will mimic the character’s actions. Only allow shows that provide good role models. If you would not want a certain character as your child, don’t let them watch that particular show.

RULES

You are in charge, so ignore the pleads to watch “the show that all of my friends are watching”. If you feel it is not in the child’s best interest, you ultimately need to choose what is best for them. Discuss any changes to the normal routine, so there are no surprises or tantrums, and remember to stay firm. Rules on which shows and how many a day are a great way to set up a lifetime of positive media habits. Put away videos and video games that are too mature for your child. Create alternatives for individual play time.



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Activity Kits Free From the University of California

The University of California has prepared activity kits to help you teach nutrition and physical activity concepts to your young children while integrating math, language arts, and science.

These lessons come "ready-made" with all the materials you will need to teach a fun and interactive lesson with your preschoolers or kindergarteners. The curriculum was developed by the University of California or Scholastic, Inc.

We will bring the materials to your site, free of charge, and we can provide your staff with trainings and additional resources to increase their confidence in these topics. We can also plan classroom, food-themed parties, special events, and other fun sessions.

If you are interested in signing up to receive these materials, please contact us.

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