

Enjoy Smart Nutrition at School



Smart food choices provide the fuel that kids need to perform well at school – both in the classroom and during athletic events. There are many ways to support smart choices wherever children, staff, and families eat together on the school campus. Family involvement is always an important part of healthier school environments.

★ Get behind breakfast at school.

When it comes to school performance, there's no doubt that breakfast is the most important meal of the day. A morning meal fuels children's brains for paying attention, staying on task, and absorbing new information. If your school offers breakfast, use it whenever you need it. If not, ask if they can start a program.

★ Support school lunch.

Exciting things are happening in school dining rooms: more fruits and veggies, more whole grains, more tasty good-for-kids options. As you read the menus, realize that things have changed. That pizza may have a whole wheat crust, low-fat cheese, and several veggies. Join your child for lunch – and taste for yourself.

★ Drink smart with milk or water in your glass.

If your lunch includes a super-sized soft drink, it's time to make the smart switch. A single 12-ounce can of regular pop has about 150 empty calories – large drinks can easily have 300+ liquid calories with zero nutritional value. Milk, especially low-fat and fat-free, is a nutrient-rich choice with lots of nutrition for relatively few calories. After an 8-ounce glass (or carton) of milk, switch to ice-cold plain or sparkling water.

★ Start small, slow down, and savor your food.

In a hectic schedule, lunch is often a super-sized fast food, eaten quickly (maybe in the car) with little time to savor the flavors and little attention to our level of fullness. The more satisfying – and healthier – way to enjoy lunch is to start with a smaller portion (maybe half a sandwich, a cup of soup with a side salad, or shared entree). Take at least 20 minutes to eat, paying attention to the meal and your internal cues of satisfaction.

Need tasty tips for adding more fruits and vegetables to lunchtime meals? Help is just a mouse click away at www.fruitsandveggiesmorematters.org/. Sponsored by Produce for Better Health Foundation, this site covers just about everything fruit and vegetable: recipes from professional chefs, tips on best ways to shop for and store your produce, and links to a new site just for kids at www.foodchamps.org/.