

Making the Grade—Tips for Feeding School-Age Children

Good nutrition during the school-age years is key to helping children grow, feel good and do their best. Besides nourishing their growing bodies, healthful eating supplies the energy children need each day for school, activities and fun. During grade school years, 6- to 12-year-olds begin learning to make food choices on their own. Parents and caregivers play a vital role in helping children develop healthful eating and active living habits to last a lifetime.

Raising Healthy Eaters

Raising healthy eaters is like doing well in school. It takes hard work and commitment—by both parents and children. You can create an environment that encourages healthful eating with these practical guidelines.

- **Be a good role model.** Children learn habits for healthful eating and active living by watching others. Parents and other caregivers are a child's most influential teachers.
- **Make a variety of nourishing and appropriate foods available.** Then let your child decide what to eat and how much. When children listen to their body cues, they learn to eat appropriate amounts of food to satisfy their hunger.
- **Set a routine for eating.** Try to establish a time and place for eating, and eat meals as a family whenever possible. Keep the focus on meals and snacks rather than eating while watching television, playing video games or working on a computer.
- **Respect your child's appetite and food preferences.** Your child's rate of growth will vary during these years, and so will his or her appetite. Food preferences may also change as your child develops new tastes. Don't engage in power struggles or use food as a reward or punishment.
- **Involve your child in planning meals and snacks.** Children are more likely to eat foods that they help plan, choose or prepare. This is an opportunity for children to try new foods and develop cooking skills, too.
- **Keep mealtimes relaxed.** This is an ideal time for family conversation and bonding.



Carrot Pinwheels

Breakfast Basics

Breakfast feeds a child's body and brain—helping to provide the energy and stamina a child needs to pay attention in class, get schoolwork done and participate in physical activities. Breakfast eaters are also more likely to meet their daily needs for important nutrients like calcium and iron. Serve one of these quick and tasty ideas to help your child get off to a great start each morning.

- **Last night's leftovers.** Re-heat veggie pizza or try a meatloaf sandwich topped with tomato slices. Serve with milk.
- **Waffle topper.** Top a warm toaster waffle with a scoop of low fat cottage cheese and some fresh fruit.

- **Breakfast wrap.** Roll up scrambled eggs and peppers, refried beans and cheese, peanut butter and banana slices or any other favorite combination in a tortilla.
- **Yogurt parfait.** Layer yogurt, berries and ready-to-eat cereal in a dessert dish.
- **Grab and go foods.** No-time-for-breakfast choices can include items such as a cereal bar, peanut butter sandwich, small bag of ready-to-eat cereal, muffin, fruit, string cheese, yogurt, applesauce, juice box or small carton of milk.

Smart Snacking

When planned for and chosen carefully, snacks can be a “nutrition opportunity” for your school-age child. Here are a few reasons to encourage smart snacking.

- **Snacks keep kids fueled between meals.** For children involved in after-school play, sports activities or lessons, a nutritious snack helps keep them alert and promotes endurance and optimal performance.
- **Snacks can fill in nutrient gaps.** Snacks can contribute about one-fourth of the calories and nutrients your child needs each day.

- **Snacks help prevent between meal hunger.** When appropriately spaced between meals, snacks help keep hunger at bay and may curtail overeating at the next meal.
- Go easy on fats and sweets. Fats and sweets can be part of healthful eating, but should not replace more nutritious foods from the five food groups.
- Encourage kids to brush their teeth after eating or, if that's not possible, to rinse their mouths with water or chew sugarless gum.

A+ for Physical Activity

For good health, physical activity and healthful eating go hand-in-hand. The grade school years are a great time to help children develop positive physical activity habits. Children need at least 60 minutes of physical activity each day. Help your child find fun ways to move. Encourage active play, such as running, jumping rope, dancing and biking; family or neighborhood games, such as tag, kickball or badminton; as well as organized activities, such as soccer, swimming, softball and basketball.

Check out these kid-friendly Healthy Living food ideas that show how delicious healthful eating can taste!

Carrot Pinwheels

Prep: 15 min. plus refrigerating **Makes:** 4 servings

- 2 flour tortillas (8 inch)
- 3 Tbsp. PHILADELPHIA Chive & Onion Cream Cheese Spread
- 2 carrots, finely shredded (about 1 cup)
- 2 green onions, thinly sliced

SPREAD tortillas with cream cheese spread. Top with vegetables.

ROLL up tortillas tightly; wrap individually in plastic wrap. Refrigerate 30 min.

UNWRAP roll-ups; cut each into 6 pieces just before serving.

Nutrition Bonus: The carrots in these colorful low fat snacks are an excellent source of vitamin A.

Nutrition Information Per Serving: 120 calories, 4.5g total fat, 2g saturated fat, 10mg cholesterol, 230mg sodium, 16g carbohydrate, 2g dietary fiber, 3g sugars, 3g protein, 110%DV vitamin A, 6%DV vitamin C, 6%DV calcium, 6%DV iron.

Exchange: 1 Starch, 1 Fat

Chicken Tinga Tortilla Cups

Prep: 20 min. **Makes:** 6 servings. 1 filled cup each

- 6 whole wheat tortillas (6 inch)
- 2 cups shredded cooked chicken
- 3/4 cup red salsa
- 2 cups shredded lettuce
- 1 tomato, chopped
- 1/2 cup KRAFT Mexican Style 2% Finely Shredded Four Cheese

HEAT oven to 425°F.

CRUMPLE 6 sheets of foil to make 6 (3-inch) balls; place on baking sheet. Place 1 tortilla over each ball; spray with cooking spray. Bake 6 to 8 min. or until tortillas are golden brown. (Tortillas will drape over balls as they bake to form cups.)

MEANWHILE, combine chicken and salsa in microwavable bowl; cover with waxed paper. Microwave on HIGH 2 min. or until heated through.

FILL tortilla cups with chicken mixture; top with remaining ingredients.

Nutrition Bonus: The crisp baked tortillas make perfect shells for the flavorful filling in this delicious entrée that is a good source of calcium from the cheese.

Nutrition Information Per Serving: 240 calories, 9g total fat, 3.5g saturated fat, 50mg cholesterol, 520mg sodium, 21g carbohydrate, 2g dietary fiber, 2g sugars, 19g protein, 8%DV vitamin A, 8%DV vitamin C, 15%DV calcium, 10%DV iron.

Exchange: 1-1/2 Starch, 2 Meat (L), 1/2 Fat

Dietary Exchanges based on *Choose Your Foods: Exchange Lists for Diabetes* © 2008 by the American Diabetes Association and the American Dietetic Association.