



Healthy Eating Ideas for the Whole Family



Breakfast

Everyone has heard it before: breakfast is the most important meal of the day. It's true!

When you wake up in the morning, your body has been fasting for a number of hours. That is why breakfast "breaks the fast."

When you wake up, your body's blood sugar level is low. Without a nutritious breakfast to start the day, both your mind and body will suffer. Our brains and nervous systems are the prime consumers of blood sugar. They need a good supply of food (and the sugars in food) to work well.

Here are some tips for having a balanced breakfast that the whole family can eat.

- Ready-to-eat cereals are good choices. Just be sure to buy one that contains some whole grains, fibre, and the least amount of sugar and fat.
- Instant oatmeal is a powerful breakfast. It provides both fibre and energy to start the day. If you add some fresh fruit, yogurt or even dried fruit, you will have a breakfast that will help you and your child get through the morning with energy to spare.
- Two pieces of whole grain toast with natural nut butter makes a good match. Look for President's Choice Just Peanuts and Kraft Natural Peanut Butter. "Natural" peanut butter has less sugar and salt than other kinds. You and your child will be getting fibre, protein, calcium, and iron. Add a banana and a glass of milk to have a complete meal.
- If your child won't eat a piece of fruit in the morning, be sure to provide them with a juice.
- Avoid fruit drinks as they usually contain only a small amount of actual juice but lots of sugar.
- Homemade granola (see box).

Granola

This recipe makes 6 cups - a serving size is 1/3 cup (85 mL).

- 3 cups rolled oats (750 mL)
- 1/3 cup firmly packed brown sugar (85 mL)
- 1/2 cup canola oil (125 mL)
- 1 cup dried apples, chopped (250 mL)
- 1 cup raisins (250 mL)
- 1/2 cup walnuts (125 mL)
- 1/3 cup sunflower seeds (85 mL)
- 2 tbsp sesame seeds (30 mL)

Preheat oven to 350°F (180°C).

Combine rolled oats, brown sugar, and canola oil in large bowl. Add all other ingredients and stir well. Spread the mixture on a cookie sheet with a rim. Bake for 30 minutes or until golden, stirring twice. Cool and store in a jar or container with a tight lid.

can be filled with just about anything. You can also slice them into pinwheels if you want to be fancy!

- Most children enjoy eating cold macaroni and cheese placed in a plastic lunch container.
- Fill a lunch container with raw finger foods such as grapes or cherry tomatoes, baby carrots or celery sticks. You can make a dip with plain yogurt and low fat sour cream. Add some whole wheat crackers to the lunch box and you have a healthy meal.
- Always pack a drink or two. The best choices are water or a fruit juice. Your active child needs to be well hydrated.
- Fill a 6-inch round pita pocket with hummus, lettuce and grated cheese.
- Freeze a small (individual size) tub of stirred yogurt and add it to the lunch box; it will thaw by lunch.
- Give your child fruit you know they like to eat. Bananas tend to go mushy and brown in a backpack.
- Add a small container of trail mix or a granola bar to the lunch box.
- Banana nut muffins (or other kinds of muffins) are popular too.

Dinner

In many homes, this is a hectic time. Children often have to go to sporting or other activities in the early evening. If children have been eating well during the day, they probably still have lots of energy left for the evening, but don't be fooled by this. All children still need to eat a meal in the evening. Choose foods that you can prepare quickly and that provide a meal with proper nourishment.

- Bags of frozen stir fry vegetables are very useful for making a meal in a minute without advance planning. If you have some chicken, beef, tofu or turkey from the day before, add it to the stir fried veggies with some cooked rice and you have a complete meal.
- Suggest that your children eat fresh or canned fruit (in its own juice) for dessert. Yogurt is also a good choice.
- Serve low fat milk or water as the drink at dinner time.

Lunch

You can adapt these lunch ideas to suit children of any age:

- Tortillas make a great option instead of bread. You can get small and large tortillas. They are easy to roll up and

Hydration

With their busy lives, it's easy for children to not drink enough fluids. In fact, most people do not drink enough fluids! Did you know that by the time you are thirsty you are already dehydrated?

Your children will stay hydrated if they start the day with fluids and continue drinking during the day. If they take a water bottle to school with them, they can drink water or other fluid as often as they have a chance to do so.

- Fluids do not always have to be in the form of water. They can come from juicy fruits (like watermelon, grapes, and oranges), from vegetables, rice, pasta, milk, and yogurt.
- When children are well hydrated, they will have more energy and will perform better in sports and in school.

If your child is doing a physical activity that lasts for 60 minutes or less, then water is the best choice for proper hydration. If the activity is one that lasts beyond 60 minutes, then you can choose a sports drink. This will provide the child with the energy needed to perform for a longer time at the level needed.

- Buy a sport drink with sodium, potassium and 6 to 8% carbohydrate content, such as Gatorade or Powerade.
- Make your own sports drink (see box). Be aware that fruit juices, fruit drinks, and soft drinks can cause stomach upset when used instead of a sports drink.

Snacks

- You can put yogurt tubes in the freezer to make cool treats in the heat of the summer.
- Cheese cubes (or if your budget allows, cheese strings) with some whole wheat crackers make a good snack later in the day. They can also be eaten as part of a quick breakfast. When children eat cheese and whole grain crackers, they are getting calcium and protein, as well as a tasty snack.
- Homemade trail mix is an easy snack to carry around. Put some sunflower seeds, almonds or cashews, raisins, dried cranberries or other dried fruit together in a bag or plastic container with a tight lid. Keep it handy so your

Homemade Sports Drink

- 1/4 cup fruit juice (any kind is okay, just make sure it is real juice not a fruit drink)
- 1/4 teaspoon salt
- 4 tablespoons sugar
- 3 3/4 cups of water

Mix all the ingredients together and store in the fridge. Easy!

Try this easy recipe for a smoothie:

- 1 cup of vanilla fortified soy beverage
- 1 1/2 oz cubed tofu (extra protein)
- 1 banana
- 1/2 teaspoon vanilla
- 1 tablespoon honey (or sugar)
- 10 ice cubes

Blend all the ingredients in your blender and enjoy!

children can take a handful in a small bag as they run out the door. It's much better than a bag of chips!

- Granola bars can be good choices, but read the label on the box to make sure that the ones you buy have low sugar content and low saturated fat.
- Peanut butter (or other nut butters) and 100% whole grain crackers or breads are a good snack.
- Fresh fruit is always good, especially when served with a yogurt dip.
- If you have a blender, you can make smoothies with yogurt, fortified soy drinks or milk, and fresh or frozen fruit. Smoothies help to fill your child with those extra nutrients and calories that they need to get through the day. You can make a smoothie in advance and put it in a thermos so it stays chilled all day.

More snack ideas:

- Raw vegetables.
- Homemade mini pizzas made with whole wheat bagels, pizza sauce, and shredded cheese.
- Individual cans of fruit salad or mandarin oranges, pears, or peaches; these are easy to pack in a school bag and children love them.
- Peanut butter on sliced apples, crackers, toast, etc.
- Cheese on apple slices and/or crackers.
- Hummus in mini pitas.
- Peanut butter and banana sandwich.
- Macaroni and cheese served with cherry tomatoes or baby carrots.
- Fresh fruit cut into bite-sized pieces (small pieces are best for preschool children).
- Tortilla wraps filled with veggies and ham or peanut butter; be sure to cut the wraps up small round pinwheels for preschool children.
- Homemade cookies and treats.

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