

Lifewire: Kids need to develop healthy eating habits

by Ven_Griva

Back-to-school time is as good a time as any for parents to start thinking about nutrition and fitness for their children.

Childhood obesity is on the rise in the United States. As a result, instances of type 2 diabetes and cardiovascular disease are being seen in children in unprecedented numbers and ever-younger ages.

The folks at the International Food Information Council in Washington, D.C., have put together a Web site - www.kidnetic.com - with the goal of promoting healthy eating habits and encouraging parents to be good role models when it comes to nutrition and exercise.

The site offers recipes for healthy meals and tips for getting kids out from in front of the television or video screen and taking part in physical activities. There are games that can be played inside or out, fun exercises disguised as scavenger hunts and contests, and information for parents to share with their youngsters.

One time when parents can help their children to choose foods that are good for them is between meals. Kids often need something to tide them over till dinner when they get home from school, but sugar- and salt-infused junk food doesn't make the grade.

The council offers the following suggestions for nutritious and great-tasting snacks.

- Cup or tube of low-fat fruit yogurt.

- Bowl of cereal (preferably whole-grain) - hot or cold.

- Cheese stick.

- Handful of peanuts, almonds or trail mix.

- Frozen fruit bar.

- Any fresh fruit such as grapes, an apple, banana or orange.

- Any dried fruit such as raisins, apricots or cranberries.

- Easy-to-eat veggies such as celery sticks, cherry tomatoes, baby carrots and cut-up green peppers.

- Graham crackers.

- Cereal bar or granola bar.

- Pudding cup.

- Fruit cup (in water or juice) or applesauce.
 - Whole-wheat crackers smeared with peanut butter.

- Salsa and baked tortilla chips.

- Hummus (chickpea dip) and pita bread.

- Microwave popcorn (light).

- Cold piece of roast chicken or slice of pizza.

For more super snack ideas, visit www.kidnetic.com.

SCREEN MONITOR

Do you ever worry about how much time your children spend watching television?

On average, children and adolescents watch TV nearly three hours a day - and that doesn't include time spent viewing DVDs, playing video games or using the computer. Without a doubt, it would be better for your young charges to spend more time outside playing and less time in sedentary activities like watching the boob tube.

The International Food Information Council offers these tips for limiting the time children spend watching television and increasing the time they spend in more physical pursuits:

- Set a screen time budget. Allot kids one to two hours per day to spend on TV, video games or fun time on the computer - their choice. Make sure you follow this budget, too. You'll be amazed at how much extra time there is for other activities when you click off the tube.

- Devise an after-school action plan. Watching TV is the No. 1 after school activity for many children. Brainstorm with your children to create a Top 10 list of activities to get them on their feet and away from the screen after school.

- Get moving in front of the TV. Set up an exercise bike in the TV room so you and the kids can put in some "pedal" time while watching television. Buy or rent a fun exercise DVD such as aerobic dance, kickboxing, or yoga and do it with them.

- Turn it off at meal times. Setting a no TV policy during family meals channels your attention into what is going on in each other's lives.

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