

Getting your kids to eat right

Persuading your child to develop good eating habits can be a challenge.



- Offer a variety of healthy options so they can decide what and how much to eat. Include a variety of veggies, fruit, lean proteins (including non-meat options, such as beans, lentils, nuts, seeds, and tofu), and whole grains.
- Encourage your child to eat a nutritious breakfast. Examples: whole-grain cereal with fruit, bean-veggie burrito, or leftovers.
- Limit fast food meals. A steady diet of fast foods tends to be high in fat and generally doesn't provide all the nutrients a child needs.
- Don't punish or reward behavior with food. Punishing children by withholding food can deprive them of required nutrients. Rewarding them with food can encourage overeating and weight gain.
- Be a role model for healthy eating. Children can't be expected to adopt healthy eating habits if parents don't.

NUTRITION-PACKED SCHOOL LUNCHES

- Try sandwiches, using turkey, chicken, peanut butter and low-fat cheese or tuna fish instead of processed lunch meats.
- Pack finger foods like grapes, carrot sticks, celery stalks, and other fruit or crunchy vegetables instead of potato chips.

Beware of convenience foods that claim to be nutritious. Here are some of the traps to look out for:

- **Fruit drinks.** Some contain only a small amount of fruit juice, but a lot of added sugar.
- **Breakfast bars.** These usually contain lots of sugar and very little in the way of nutrition.
- **Pre-popped popcorn.** Some popcorn products have a lot of oil, salt, and contain artificial coloring.

TEACH TEENS TO SNACK WISELY

The right foods for between-meal snacking can actually boost a teen's intake of critical nutrients.

- Leftovers, like chicken drumsticks, are high in iron and make great late-night snacks.
- Low-fat milk (or fortified plant milk), yogurt, and cheese can provide needed calcium.
- Keep the kitchen stocked with whole wheat crackers, sliced watermelon, fruit salad, unsweetened beverages (such as fruit flavored fizzy waters and tea), and other ready-to-eat alternatives to junk food.
- Encourage teens to invent their own, easy-to-eat snacks, like their own personalized trail mix with a variety of nuts, seeds, dried fruit, and whole grain cereal.