

PARMA SUN POST

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Proper diet and habits will help kids in school

This column is dedicated to health and fitness, and that extends to the health of children and fitness of the mind.

Most children are back in school now. Here are a few key things parents can do to help their children succeed in school this year.

First, make sure your children are eating a great breakfast. Avoid serving sugary cereals and pre-packaged breakfast pastries. Those products contain an incredible amount of sugar, artificial flavors, colors, and preservatives. More importantly, these products lack the nutrition of wholesome foods as Mother Nature intended.

Serve healthy foods, like oatmeal, eggs, whole-grain cereals and breakfast fruits. Be sure the televisions in the house are off, and leave your children plenty of time to eat slowly and thoroughly. Don't let them do written homework at the table, but it's OK to let them study for a test, or quiz them on spelling words while they eat.

Second, make sure your children leave the house with a nutritious lunch. Nearly every hot lunch served in our school systems isn't nearly as healthy as it should be. Some schools' menus are dominated by fried foods, white-flour products, processed meats, high-fat foods and sugary desserts.

Yes, fruits and vegetables are sometimes available, but how often does your child ac-



Health & Fitness
Q & A

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tually pick the apple instead of the french fries?

Instead, pack your child a nutritious lunch. Perhaps a sandwich made with lean meat (like turkey) on whole-grain bread, fresh sliced veggies, or even a small salad with sliced chicken on

top. Even better, have your children become part of the lunch-making process. Teach them about eating wholesome foods, and encourage older children to pack their own healthy lunch before they go to bed.

After school, don't let your children run in the house and watch TV. Allow them to have a small snack of sliced veggies or some fruit with cottage cheese, talk to them about their day at school, and have them start their homework right away. When finished, encourage your child to enjoy physical activity.

Playing outside with friends, participating in organized sports, even riding a bicycle are all preferable to watching TV or playing video games. Physical activity stimulates the brain and boosts the immune system and makes children healthy. Allowing children to sit in front of a video screen and vegetate does them a tremendous disservice. Indeed, reducing kids TV and Internet time may be the unpopular choice.

Set an early bedtime rate, and they need sleep. A lack of

sleep can hinder immune function and cause crankiness, irritability, and impaired concentration. Encourage a nighttime routine free of television shows. Instead, promote reading or conversation with parents.

Wake your kids up early so mornings aren't rushed or hectic. A bad morning can lead to a bad day.

As for extra things you can do, have your son or daughter take a children's multivitamin every day. Encourage fun activities that stimulate the mind, like board games or chess or checkers. Limit sweets and sugars as much as possible.

Talk with your children often about the importance of good grades and good behavior. Your expectations will be important to your children. Knowing that parents care, through words and actions, will serve as a powerful motivator to succeed in school.

Giving children the positive, healthy lifestyle they need to succeed will encourage good grades, healthy development, and strong bodies. Help your child make this year the best yet!

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