



The Brain-Boosting Power of Healthy Eating

Nutrition tips for learning

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It's the beginning of a new school year and as young children head to preschool and kindergarten, parents can help their kids shine in the classroom by preparing healthy meals for breakfast – and for the lunchbox. Proper nutrition plays a key role in a child's ability to learn and do well in school. According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, kids who eat a balanced diet and start the day with a nutritious breakfast have more energy and concentrate better in class.

Parents, caregivers and early learning educators play a valuable role in providing healthy food choices to children at an early age. To help kids develop lifelong healthy eating habits, First 5 San Joaquin offers the following tips.

Power up on breakfast: After a good night's sleep, breakfast provides important nutrients that give kids a great start to the day and get them ready to learn. Prepare healthy breakfast choices for your child like oatmeal with low-fat milk, raisins and banana slices; or go berry wild with a low-fat yogurt smoothie made with strawberries and served with scrambled eggs on whole wheat toast.

Make fruits and vegetables a priority: Help your child get the recommended five to nine servings of fruits and vegetables a day by adding lettuce and tomatoes to a sandwich or offering cut-up fruit like apples or oranges with every meal.

Indulge your creative side: Kids love healthy foods that look fun – and taste great! So be creative with meals. Top a cheese quesadilla with a smiley face using green peas for eyes and carrots for a mouth, or cut sandwiches in triangles and other fun shapes.

Offer healthy snacks: Toddlers and young children should eat frequent, small meals throughout the day. Pack nourishing snacks to provide an energy boost, like bite-size fruits and vegetables. Low-salt crackers and cheese slices are also good choices.

Get kids involved: When children help prepare a meal, they're more likely to eat it and try foods they may not have liked before. Ask your child to pick fruits and vegetables with you at the grocery store or local farmer's market. When preparing meals, let your child tear lettuce for a salad or add veggie toppings to pizza slices.

To help you prepare nutritious meals, First 5 California offers a free mini cookbook – *Yummy for Your Tummy* – which has healthy, low-cost recipes for the whole family. To order your copy, call 1-800-KIDS-025. For more information on First 5 San Joaquin programs and services, call (209) 953-5437 or visit www.sjckids.org and www.first5california.com/parents.

About First 5 San Joaquin

Research shows that a child's brain develops most dramatically in the first five years and what parents and caregivers do during these years to support their child's growth will have a meaningful impact throughout life. Based on this research, California voters passed Proposition 10 in 1998, adding a 50 cents-per-pack tax on cigarettes to support programs for expectant parents and children ages 0 to 5. First 5 San Joaquin distributes approximately \$10 million in Prop. 10 revenues to programs and services that meet local needs.