

## NUTRITION & HEALTH

### Quotes

*As parents and educators, it is our job to create a new culture for health, one where we model good eating and fitness habits, provide healthful shared meals and set limits on foods with little nutritional value.*

– Connie Evers, *How to Teach Nutrition to Kids*, 2003

*Boys and girls who watch four hours or more of television each day have greater body fat and a greater body mass index.*

– *Journal of the American Medical Association*, 2001

### Notes

In 2002 the World Health Organization noted that this generation of children maybe the first generation not to outlive their predecessors. According to the U.S. Surgeon General, in the USA the number of overweight children has doubled and the number of overweight adolescents has tripled since 1980. Overweight and obesity can lead to serious health problems. The likelihood of developing Type 2 diabetes and hypertension rises steeply with increasing body fatness.

Parents and schools need to “team up” to address this serious issue. Children need good nutrition and exercise in order to be healthy. Healthy children feel better, look better, have higher self esteems, get ill less often than their peers, and usually perform well in school, both academically and behaviorally.

### Strategies

1. Don't let children skip meals. Skipping leads to low blood sugar which can cause them to become tired, irritable, or unable to concentrate.
2. A good breakfast is crucial. Many studies find that children who eat good breakfasts perform better in class than those who don't start the day with a nutritious meal.
3. Provide a high fiber breakfast such as oatmeal, bran cereal, or whole wheat toast. People who eat high fiber breakfasts have increased energy and tend to snack less throughout the day.
4. Schools need programs in place to make sure every child has a good breakfast.

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### strategies

5. Parents and teachers can devise school wide nutrition policies that focus on such things as the types of snacks sold in the cafeteria, how often candy is used for rewards, what items are being sold in the vending machines, and making sure children get enough fruits and vegetables.
6. Teachers can set limits on the number of birthday and holiday parties that occur in their classrooms. Instead of all 25 children having individual birthday celebrations in which large amounts of cake and ice cream are consumed, teachers can schedule monthly parties. For instance, in September, one party or celebration is scheduled for all the students who have a birthday that month.
7. Because of the emphasis on test scores these days, students are getting less playtime. Parents need to be aware of this and encourage schools to make sure children are getting at least 30 minutes of play and exercise daily. Parents may request that students get recess before lunch so they won't feel rushed.
8. Parents need to set limits on television, video games, and computer use. The more hours children spend sitting in front of these forms of entertainment, the more likely they are to snack on unhealthy foods and gain weight. Also, the more they sit, the less exercise they get.
9. Families that eat meals together tend to eat more nutritious foods. People who eat by themselves often consume more high-fat and sugary foods.
10. When eating at fast food restaurants, don't allow children to "super size" their meals.
11. Schools may consider having "self-serve" salad bars for students every day at lunch time.
12. Avoid saying, "Eat everything on your plate," or "Come on, one more bite."
13. Promote water as the main beverage. Discourage sugary and caffeinated drinks. 100% fruit juices are acceptable.
14. Dairy products should be of the low-fat variety. Low-fat milk, string cheese and yogurt are good choices.
15. Use whole grain, whole wheat bread as much as possible.
16. Pre-measured snack packs are good treats because you know exactly how much sugar, fat, and calories are in them.
17. Try to get your child to eat a bagged lunch, even in high school. Kids will most likely choose unhealthy items from vending machines if you give them cash.
18. Get children actively involved in sports, hiking, swimming, gymnastics, and other fitness activities.
19. Model good nutrition and fitness. Children need to see adults eating good foods and exercising. Get outside and play with your children.
20. Have children study different cultures and discuss their diets.
21. Take children to farmer's markets to pick out their favorite fruits and vegetables.
22. Let children plant vegetable gardens at home and/or school.
23. Let children have input in selecting nutritious food items at the grocery store.
24. Parents need to realize that children can be sneaky at times when it comes to food consumption. Mom may pack Joey a nutritious lunch, but in the cafeteria he ends up trading food items with other students, or he may throw his lunch away and spend his allowance money on pizza and french fries.
25. Parents may utilize the 80/20 rule with their children. 80% of a child's diet should be very healthy and nutritious (fruit, vegetables, low-fat dairy products, lean meat) and the remaining 20% is allowed for a small amount of "junk food."
26. Parents can supplement their children's diet with a daily vitamin pill or nutritional milk shake drink.