



Back-to-School Brain Food *Good Nutrition and Healthy Eating Tips*

It's September and another school year has begun! Amidst all the back-to-school shopping, after-school activities and hours of homework, don't forget to stock the fridge and cabinets with healthy food choices for a head-start this fall. Provide kids with the nutrients they need to power through a long school day, alert and ready to hit the books and participate in extracurricular activities.

Foods that boost brain power

Staying well-hydrated is extremely important for kids and helps prevent fatigue and keep concentration levels going strong. Skip the sugary soda and energy drinks and give kids a bottle of water instead! Bring a little 'zing' to regular water with a slice or two of lemon, lime or orange.

Complex, whole-grains contain folate and other B vitamins which help improve memory function and are rich in fiber, providing a steady stream of energy so your child can ace that math test. Make the switch to 100% whole wheat bread and look for wholegrain cereals with 5 grams of fiber or more.

For a high-powered brain boost, make sure kids get plenty of choline, found in eggs and nuts. Start the day with some scrambled eggs with a few fresh vegetables mixed in, served over a slice of wholegrain toast.

Another important player in brain development, omega-3 fatty acids are healthy fats found in a variety of foods including cold-water fatty fish (like salmon and tuna), avocado, flaxseed oil or ground flaxseed, nuts (like walnuts and almonds), and heart-healthy oils (like olive oil). Get creative in the kitchen with your kids and encourage them to taste new foods such as avocado or grilled salmon; you never know where their taste buds will take them!

Foods that drain the brain

Now that you've got your brain-boosting list down pat, steer clear of certain items that can quickly drain energy and kids' attention levels, often causing short spikes in activity and then crashing lows from excess sugar and artificial ingredients. Check labels and ingredient lists. Bypass the following items on your next trip to the grocery store:

- Foods with artificial sweeteners or coloring
- High-fructose corn syrup
- Sugary fruit drinks, colas and juices
- Refined white sugars and breads
- Trans fats and partially-hydrogenated oils
- Processed snack foods and luncheon meats

These foods are tempting because they seem to be quick hunger fixes, but in the long run they contribute to weight gain in kids and parents alike. Instead, get your kids involved by fixing snacks together in the evenings. Eating healthy can be fun when it is a family affair!

Sources: www.thedietchannel.com, www.kymythy.com