

Tips for Parents by Susie Kohl

Giving Children Healthy Choices for Snack, Lunch

REMEMBER THE SAYING “YOU ARE WHAT YOU EAT”? I hate to think how my teenage pizza addiction affected my growing body. Fortunately, today parents have much more information available about nutrition than our families did when we were growing up.

Parents are put in a very difficult position when it comes to food. With national awareness of the role food plays in childhood obesity and diabetes increasing, people are concerned about their children’s health. At the same time, children are conditioned to want trendy foods that contain ingredients that are bad for them.

Teachers want to support parents in sending easy-to-prepare, healthy foods for their children. We see the effects of sugar and additives in children’s behavior so we put a lot of effort into offering the healthiest snacks we can find.

Here are some suggestions for lunches that promote physical and emotional well-being:

- Having portions of a variety of foods allows children to make choices at lunchtime. They may not be in the mood for last night’s leftovers, but if they also have slices of cheese or a hard-boiled egg, it makes lunchtime more satisfying. Protein is important at lunch and for late afternoon snacks. Protein bars actually contain lots of sugar.
- Include servings of fruits and vegetables. Hot vegetables or soup in a thermos, cut fruit in plain yogurt, plain applesauce, celery with peanut butter, carrots with ranch dressing, and nuts are all foods that promote children’s growth at a time when their brains and bodies are growing rapidly.
- Offering all healthy choices also empowers children because they can decide what they are in the mood to eat without being obsessed by the sugary treat to come. If you do include candy or cookies, less is more.

Please feel free to ask teachers for ideas for good foods that take little time.

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