

# Nutrition & Health News

JR Lowell Elementary School Parent and Child Wellness Newsletter  
February 2009 Volume II, Issue 1



## Healthy Snacks

Serving healthy snacks to our children is important to providing good nutrition for growth and development, supporting lifelong healthy eating habits, and preventing costly and potentially disabling diseases, like heart disease, cancer, diabetes, high blood pressure, and obesity. The childhood years are a parent's last chance to influence food choices. By fostering the development of healthy eating habits, parents help determine whether development will take place in a positive or negative direction.

Children need regularly planned snacks because their stomachs are small and they simply are not likely to eat enough at mealtime to carry them through to the next meal. Healthy snacks are typically nutrient dense, meaning they offer concentrated nutritional benefits in relation to calorie count. Many typical snacks including chips, cookies, brownies and candy may provide calories but they are considered "empty calories" because they have little nutritional value. It is *ok* to have these types of snacks *occasionally*. All foods can fit into a healthy diet. Moderation is the key.

Parents sometimes overlook perhaps the single most important influence on their child's snack/food habits - themselves. If children see parents/caregivers eating a healthy snack they are more likely to do the same.

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*Just as important as choosing healthy snacks, regular play time helps with a child's physical development. Through active play, kids strengthen social skills, build a positive self image, and increase learning. Turn off the television or computer and encourage fitness by joining your kids in outdoor games or indoor play. Active children tend to grow up to be active adults!*



## Did You Know.....

- ...the word "snack" comes from the Dutch *snacken*, which means "to bite"?
- ... pretzels can be traced back to Roman times with a monk being credited as the first to bestow its unusual shape(around A.D. 610) in imitation of someone praying?
- ...Americans consume more than 18 billion quarts of popped popcorn each year?

## From the Nurse's Desk..... By Mrs. Taverna

### Healthy Snacks for School Aged Children

Snacks can, and should be a part of every child's balanced diet. An afternoon snack gives kids more energy after school and they'll be able to concentrate on homework, and have more energy to play outside rather than merely flop down in front of the television. If all the choices you give them are reasonably nutritious ones, then everybody's happy: your kids get to choose their snacks and you get to ensure that they're eating healthfully.

Some suggestions for healthy snacks are:

#### Fruits and Vegetables

Be sure to offer fruits and vegetables for snacks since most kids do not eat the recommended servings of fruits and vegetables each day. Eating fruits and vegetables lowers the risk of heart disease, cancer and high blood pressure.

**Frozen Fruit:** Try freezing grapes or buy frozen blueberries, strawberries, peaches and mangoes (without any added sugars or sweeteners.)

**Fruit Salad:** Get kids to help make a fruit salad. Use a variety of colored fruits to add to the appeal.

**Smoothies:** Blend fruit with yogurt or milk and ice. Many store bought smoothies have added sugars and calories and are not healthy choices.

**Vegetables:** Serve raw with dip or salad dressing. Try low-fat salad dressings, store-bought low-fat dips, bean dips, guacamole, or hummus. Try a baked potato w/salsa.

**Veggie Pockets:** Cut whole wheat pitas in half and let kids add veggies with dressing or hummus.

#### Healthy Grains (bread, crackers, cereals, etc.)

Though most kids eat plenty of grain products, too much of those grains are cookies, snack cakes, sugary cereals and other grains that are high in sugars or fats. Try to serve mostly whole grains. Make mini pizzas made with English muffins or pita bread.

#### Dairy Foods

Dairy foods are a great source of calcium, which can help build strong bones. However, dairy products are the biggest sources of artery-clogging saturated fat in kids' diets. To protect children's bones and hearts make sure dairy choices are reduced fat or fat free versions of your favorites.

**Yogurt:** Look for brands that are low-fat or fat-free, moderate in sugars (no more than 30 grams in a 6 oz. cup) and high in calcium (at least 25% of daily value for calcium in a 6 oz. cup).

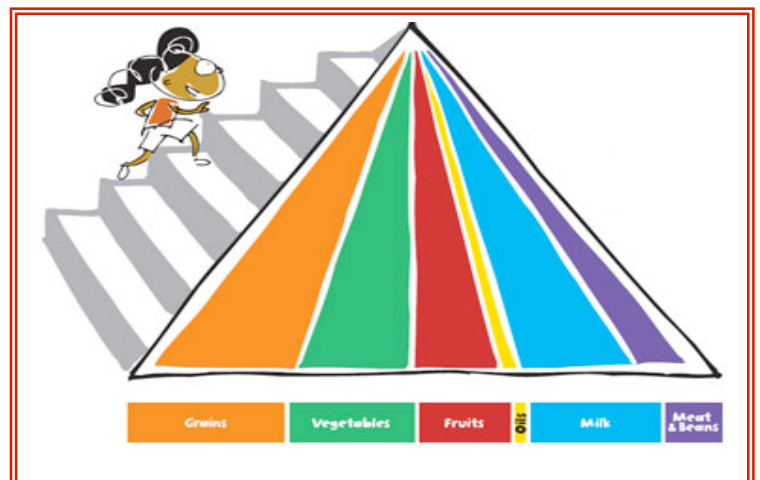
**Low-Fat Cheese:** Cheese is the number two source of heart damaging saturated fat in children's diets. Be sure to serve reduced fat cheeses with other foods like fruit, vegetables, or whole grain crackers.

#### Healthy Beverages

**Water:** Water should be the main drink served to kids at snack times. Water satisfies thirst and does not have sugar or calories.

**Low-Fat and Fat Free Milk:** Milk provides key nutrients such as calcium and vitamin D. Choose fat-free milk (skim) or low-fat (1%) milk to avoid the heart damaging saturated fat found in whole milk or 2% milk.

**Fruit Juice:** Juice should be **100%** fruit juice. The *American Academy of Pediatrics* recommends that children ages 1-6 years old drink no more than 6 ounces(one serving ) of juice a day and that children 7-18 years old drink no more than 12 ounces (two servings) of juice a day.





## February is American Heart Month

The Lowell School PTO invites students, teachers, & staff to:

Decorate a paper heart. Use your imagination, simple, fancy, big or small.

Bring your decorated heart to school on Friday, February 13<sup>th</sup>.

Hearts will be collected inside the front entrance that morning and displayed in the cafeteria entrance.

♥ If you wish to contribute, we will gladly accept donations to the **American Heart Association**. 100% of the donations go directly to the American Heart Association.

♥ This event will run simultaneously with Ms. Donahue's 3<sup>rd</sup> to 5<sup>th</sup> grade **Jump Rope for Heart** program.



## Smart Snacking Strategies

**Prepare healthy snacks in advance.** Did you know that you can make your own granola or trail mix? When you make something yourself, you get to control the ingredients and put in what's good for you. Plan ahead by having cut up fruit and veggies in containers/baggies in the fridge where kids can see them.

**Make healthy snacking easy.** Put snack foods like pretzels, whole grain crackers, nuts, peanut butter, cheese, yogurt, fruits and vegetables on lower shelves so kids can get to them easily.

**Make it interesting.** Healthy snacking doesn't have to be boring as long as you give yourself a variety of choices. Whole-wheat pretzels with spicy mustard, apple or pear slices with low-fat cheese, pita triangles with hummus, or low-fat fruit yogurt are healthy, tasty, and easy.

## Physical Activity of the Month

Lowell Physical Education teachers  
Ms. Pagliuca and Ms. Donahue  
present some physical activities to  
experience:

There is a true story of a runner who one day found a tennis ball while running. He took the ball home for his dog. After a while he grew tired of carrying the ball, so he began tossing, bouncing and chasing the ball. He continued playing with the ball while running. When he finished his run, he checked his watch, and found he had run his fastest time ever. He realized that since he was having fun, he didn't realize how hard he was running. His name was Ken Martin, America's fastest marathon runner that year (1989).

- Children can practice jogging and playing with a tennis ball while running.
- They may choose to dribble their ball, play catch with themselves or with a partner.

### Another tennis ball idea:

**Tennis ball squeeze:** When working with tennis balls, children can squeeze a ball in one hand until their arm gets tired. (This won't take very long.) The tennis ball is approximately the size of our heart and the heart is also a muscle that squeezes, (like our arm muscle does). The heart pumps blood that goes to all parts of the body. The heart must be strong because it never sleeps, goes on vacation, or stops to really rest. It does this for our whole life!

# Break the Heart Code

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This message tells you how to have a healthy heart.  
Change each letter to the one that comes just before it in the alphabet.

A B C D E F G H I J K L M N O P Q R S T U V W X Y Z

Z P V                    D B O                    I B W F                    B

I F B M U I Z                    I F B S U,                    J U' T

B T                    F B T Z                    B T,                    P O F,

U X P,                    U I S F F!                    F B U                    I F B M U I Z

T U V G G,                    N P W F                    B S P V O E                    F O P V H I,

M J W F                    U P C B D D P                    -                    G S F F!



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### Food Safety Tips for Snacks

- As with any meal, **always** wash your hands first.
- **Prepare your child's snack on a clean surface using clean utensils.**
- Wash fruits and vegetables well before cutting them or placing them into your child's backpack.
- **Use an insulated lunch bag with a small ice pack or frozen juice box for foods that need to stay cold such as yogurt.**
- Be sure to keep reusable containers clean by washing well with warm soapy water.

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Maria B. McDermott at [mmcdermott1@watertown.k12.ma.us](mailto:mmcdermott1@watertown.k12.ma.us) .

### References

Kansas State University Research and Extension, USDA (United States Department of Agriculture), USDA's MyPyramid, Understanding Nutrition, Kidspiration, The Children's Health Fund, American Heart Association, Alliance for a Healthier Generation, Eat Right Ontario