

NUTRITION AND SCHOOL PERFORMANCE

The question is often asked – Do we need to worry about what our children are eating if they are active and not becoming overweight? Research has found that the answer is yes!

A review commissioned by the Obesity Action Coalition has found that children's diets affect their attendance and behaviour in school as well as their long term academic performance. Classroom nutrition lessons backed up by school policies that encourage healthy food to be eaten at school and involving the whole school community in the talk about nutrition supports this effect.

In New Zealand we assume that our children are all well nourished and that overweight children are even more so. This is not necessarily the case with some of the issues being:

- Diets high in fat and sugar
- Consumption of foods that do not provide adequate vitamins and minerals
- Inadequate intake due to a shortage of money for groceries

The key is to consume a variety of foods and keep them healthy the majority of the time.

SOME TIPS FOR HEALTHY EATING:

- Start your child's day with a substantial breakfast – they have just gone for the whole night without eating and need to refuel. This way they will be able to concentrate in class in the morning.
- Morning tea and lunch are the perfect times to get the recommended two serves of fruit into your child's diet – fresh, tinned or dried fruit, banana sandwiches, fruit kebabs. And, when you are supervising several children, they love a platter of a variety of chopped fruit.
- Prepare your child's lunch around a bread-based item such as slices of bread, pita bread, rolls, panini, English muffins, naan bread or pizza base with a topping. Young school children need 5 and older children 6 servings of bread and cereals each day. Remember this at breakfast, lunch and snack times.
- When you need extras for the lunch box or snack time try cubes of cheese, popcorn, small muffins or fruit buns, pancakes, cold cooked or raw vegetables with dips
- Children need small drinks often and may forget to drink when they are busy. Water is best and it is cheap and easy to get. Many classes have drink bottles so children can keep hydrated but remember to give them a thorough soapy wash each week!

So, to keep your child performing at their best, both mentally and physically, make healthy eating the norm rather than the exception. One of the most important lessons to learn in life is how to eat well!

Healthy Nibbles

Nutrition and Physical Activity Information for Children

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For more information visit: www.cph.co.nz

Canterbury

District Health Board

Te Poari Hauora o Waitaha