

Nutrition News

VOLUME 10, No. 4

A COMMUNITY NUTRITION PROGRAMS NEWSLETTER

De'Shoin Friendship,
MPA, CFPP

Annrose Guarino,
PhD, RD

Sandra May
MS, RD

Heli Roy,
PhD, RD

April is National Minority Health Month Bring It or Buy It: Make Lunch Healthy, Green and Good! *In Schools, Even Food Can Teach Us a Lesson*

Minorities participate in great numbers in the school lunch program, and some school districts have devised ways to extend food service through the summer to guarantee that children from lower-income households have access to at least one full meal per day.

Minority children also are particularly hard hit by obesity, high cholesterol and diabetes. Therefore, school food is critical to the health of minority children.

School mealtime also could be a great teachable moment. Using lunchtime as a teachable moment will help instill good eating habits in children, and those good habits might last a lifetime.

Lunchtime – A Teachable Moment

Lunchtime is a great time to teach children about the importance of selecting healthful and nutritious foods. Making good selections can lead to more energy, and having more energy may lead to children participating in more physical activity.

Here are some tips to help make your child's lunch healthy, green and good:

When Packing Your Child's Lunch:

- Let your children help choose the foods that will be put into their lunches. This starts with a trip to the grocery store with your children. Try to guide them toward selecting healthful food items, such as whole wheat bread, reduced-fat cheeses and yogurt, lean cuts of deli meat and plenty of fresh fruits and vegetables.
- Look to leftovers for inspiration. Leftovers can help reduce wasted food and save time as well. If you have some slices of cheese pizza left over from dinner, use them for lunch the next day. Add in a side salad with some reduced-fat dressing, and lunch is ready!
- Be creative when it comes to fruits and vegetables. Try placing some shredded carrots on a chicken salad sandwich or sprinkling raisins on a peanut butter bagel. Pack some carrot and cucumber slices with a small container of reduced-fat ranch dressing. Chop some celery stalks into bite-size pieces and spread a little peanut butter on them.
- Add a source of calcium. Since children need calcium to help build strong bones, be sure to include foods that are excellent sources of calcium, such as yogurt, cheese slices and calcium-fortified 100 percent fruit juices.
- Use pasta. If your children like pasta, try packing some pasta salad made from fun shapes like shells or wagon wheels. Mix in plenty of fresh vegetables such as red and green peppers, onions and tomatoes to add nutrition and taste.
- Eliminate sugary desserts. Instead of putting cookies or a piece of cake in for a snack, try putting more nutritious, yet tasty, snacks in your children's lunchboxes. Pretzel sticks, granola bars, unbuttered popcorn and trail mixes can add flavor and fun to a school lunch.



LSU
AgCenter
Research & Extension

SU
Center
SOUTHERN UNIVERSITY
AGRICULTURAL
RESEARCH & EXTENSION
C E N T E R

Always remember to pack perishable items, such as dairy-based products, salads and meats, in an insulated lunch bag with an ice pack inside. This will keep your children's food cold until they are ready to eat.

When Selecting Items from the School's Cafeteria:

Most schools post their menus for the week on the school's website or in the school's cafeteria. Look over the menu together and encourage your child to select healthful choices. Be flexible, however, and allow them an occasional cookie or other dessert!

Great cafeteria choices include:

- Lower-fat deli meats, such as turkey.
- Whole grain breads.
- Baked chips, yogurt, fruit muffins or trail mixes.
- Light mayonnaise or mustard.
- Vegetables and dip.
- Fresh fruit or fruit packed in natural juices.
- Low-fat milk, water or 100 percent fruit juice.

If you would like more ideas for making lunch-time a teachable moment or need additional ideas for packing a healthful lunch, please visit the School Nutrition Association's website at www.schoolnutrition.org or the SNAP-Ed Connection at <http://snap.nal.usda.gov>.



Sources:

Office of Minority Health: www.hhs.gov

Quaker Company: www.quakeroats.com

1995-2011, The Nemours Foundation/KidsHealth

Visit our website: www.LSUAgCenter.com

April 2011

Louisiana State University Agricultural Center

William R. Richardson, Chancellor

Louisiana Agricultural Experiment Station

John S. Russin, Interim Vice Chancellor and Director

Louisiana Cooperative Extension Service

Paul D. Coreil, Vice Chancellor and Director

Issued in furtherance of Cooperative Extension work, Acts of Congress of May 8 and June 30, 1914, in cooperation with the United States Department of Agriculture. The Louisiana Cooperative Extension Service provides equal opportunities in programs and employment.

This material was partially funded by USDA's Food Stamp program. The Food Stamp program provides nutrition assistance to people with low income.

To find out more, contact your parish agent.