

Good nutrition can boost school performance, expert says

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Start the day with grains, fruit and dairy.

(HealthDay)—A healthy diet can help students excel in school, a registered dietitian says.

One of the best ways to jump-start a successful school day is to provide children with a nutritious morning meal, says Debby Boutwell, a clinical dietitian in the division of nutrition therapy at Cincinnati Children's Hospital Medical Center.

This doesn't necessarily mean serving traditional breakfast foods, however. For school children, Boutwell recommends a breakfast that includes high-fiber grains, fruit and dairy products. Here are some options:

- Fiber rich and whole-grain cereals with low fat milk

- Yogurt and berries
- Toast, eggs and 100 percent fruit juice
- Whole-wheat bagels and cheese or eggs with low-fat milk
- Peanut butter and jelly sandwich with low-fat milk
- Grilled cheese sandwich with 100 percent fruit juice

Children should be having even more nutrient-rich foods for lunch, to help them stay alert throughout the day, Boutwell advised. She noted that using the website, myplate.gov, can help parents pack healthy lunches for their children. Half of a child's lunch should be fruits and vegetables, and at least half of the grains eaten at lunch should be [whole grains](#), Boutwell said. Fats and sweets should be kept to a minimum.

Among Boutwell's other lunchtime tips for school children:

- **Mix it up.** Variety is good. For example, avoid packing the same type of bread every day and make sandwiches using pitas, bagels, crackers or tortillas.
- **Simplify things.** Provide children with fruits that are easy to pick up and eat, such as apple wedges, grapes or strawberries. Packing a yogurt or peanut butter dipping sauce can also be fun for kids.
- **Limit sugary drinks.** Even 100 percent juice contains a lot of sugar. Opt for [low-fat milk](#), water or sugar-free flavored water. Don't give children drinks with caffeine or herbal supplements.
- **Review the school lunch menu.** Even [children](#) who bring their lunch to school can buy a cheese stick or milk at school to ensure it's fresh and cold. Parents should check their child's [school](#) lunch menu to review what is being served.

More information: The U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention provides more information on [school nutrition for children and teens](#).

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