

# 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](http://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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