

Back-to-School Nutrition

Alyssa Havlovic, MS, RDN, ACSM EP-C and
Jessica Meuleners, MS, RDN, LMNT
Extension Educators

The month of August means back to school for many children. Families will spend time shopping for new clothes and school supplies. However, how many families spend time planning for what they will eat every day? From hectic mornings, packing lunches, carpooling to after school activities, getting a family meal on the table in the evening, to finishing homework, the days can become long and busy. You may start to wonder how you will ever feed your family a healthy meal. Here are some quick tips and tricks to feeding your family during some of the most hectic days.

Hectic-Free Breakfasts

Many families find it hard to make breakfast and get out of the house on time to make it to school. Children who eat breakfast tend to concentrate better in the classroom, are more likely to maintain a healthy weight, and will get the energy they need to make it through the day.

The key to a healthy breakfast is balance. Try to include at least three food groups into your breakfast, such as a lean protein, whole grains, a fruit or vegetable, and milk. See the "On-the-Go Breakfast Ideas" at right.

Healthy breakfast staples to have on-hand include eggs, yogurt, whole grain cereal (choose low-sugar varieties), oatmeal, fruit (fresh, canned or frozen), whole wheat bread and low-fat milk. A great way to save time in the morning is to prepare breakfast foods on the weekend. This will save you a few extra minutes during the week as you're rushing out the door!

Smart Snacks for After School

Many families don't eat dinner until 2-3 hours after school gets out, so children may come home needing a snack. You want to find the right sized snack that will satisfy those hunger cues but not be large enough to prevent your child from being hungry for dinner. Including two food groups (one being a fruit or vegetable) will help keep your child energized but not overly full.



"Lickity Split Banana Split" made with fruit, whole grain cereal and yogurt.



Celery sticks, carrots and crackers with hummus is a delicious, smart snack!

For more kid-friendly snack, breakfast and meal ideas, go to UNL Nutrition Education Program's Pinterest page at www.pinterest.com/unlnepe

Snack time is the perfect opportunity to have some fun, experiment with new foods and include foods your child may not be getting enough of at meals. Having fresh fruits and vegetables already washed and cut make an easy snack choice. Try carrots and celery sticks with a side of hummus or serve an apple with a tablespoon of peanut butter. Trail mix with whole grains, nuts and dried fruit is another simple and healthy option.

Meal Planning and Preparation

Starting the week with a plan of five to seven healthy meals that everyone in your family enjoys will take the stress out of family meal time. Begin by choosing a main entree, such as baked chicken or tacos, then add a vegetable and/or fruit side. Be sure to include foods from all five food groups (fruits, vegetables, protein foods, grains and dairy) when planning your meals.

Watch for sales on frozen or canned vegetables and fruits, or other staples like rice and pasta to keep your pantry stocked with healthy foods. Shopping for seasonal produce is a great way to save some money and add variety to your meals. When cooking beef or poultry, double or triple the batch to use in another dish the next day (tacos, casseroles, stir-fry, etc.) or freeze for future use.

Get the whole family involved in meal planning and preparation. Allow your children to help make their lunches and snacks each week and let family members help choose the meals you will eat together. Mealtime does not have to be just one person's responsibility. When more family members play a role in getting a meal on the table, it makes for a more enjoyable experience and less pressure on you. Assign age-appropriate tasks such as setting the table, preparing the salad, and even helping with the dishes and clean-up.

see BACK-TO-SCHOOL NUTRITION on page 5

On-the-Go Ideas For Breakfast



Fruit and yogurt parfait



Egg and cheese on an English muffin



Whole wheat tortilla with peanut butter and banana



Fruit and yogurt smoothie



Homemade granola bars



Bagel topped with yogurt and fruit



Homemade granola mix



Overnight oatmeal with Greek yogurt and berries

Photos (unless otherwise noted): Craig Chandler, UNL Communications, taken for Nebraska Extension's Nutrition Education Program

USDA Center for Nutrition Policy and Promotion

CONNECT WITH US

Nebraska Extension in Lancaster County
444 Cherrycreek Road, Suite A
Lincoln, NE 68528
402-441-7180
<http://lancaster.unl.edu>



IN THIS ISSUE

Food & Health 2
Farm & Acreage 3
Pests & Wildlife 4
SuperFair Schedule . . .
Special Pullout Section
Horticulture 5
Early Childhood 5
4-H & Youth 6-7