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## IT'S BACK TO SCHOOL TIME!

As the school year is beginning, make sure you are sending your kids off to school with more than just a kiss. Children who succeed in school begin with healthy home habits. Making sure children get enough sleep, eat a healthy diet, and get enough exercise will boost their energy and overall attitudes.

Getting enough sleep is vital for growing children. The amount of sleep needed varies depending on different factors including the age of the child. Ten to 12 hours per day is the minimum for children ages three to six years old. Children between the ages seven and twelve should get at least ten hours per day, and teenagers ages twelve to 18 years old should get a minimum of 8 hours per day. As your child grows older, bedtimes seem to get later or disappear altogether so its important to encourage teens even more so to get enough rest.

The older your children get, the more vital sleep becomes because of busy extra-curricular activities and social lives. It is important to stress the importance of getting enough rest at every age to your children.

The next step in ensuring your child will be a star student is sending them off to school with a full tummy. Skipping breakfast in the midst of all the chaos is not only bad for the brain, but also damaging in maintaining a healthy weight. Studies show that kids who eat breakfast take in more of the nutrients they need, and cannot get those nutrients at any other time of day. Eating cereal that is rich in whole-grains topped with fruit is a quick and easy way to start your kids off healthy. **We recommend these healthy, kid-friendly breakfast options:**

- Half a whole-grain bagel, spread with peanut butter and topped with raisins and a glass of milk
- 8 ounces of low-fat fruited yogurt, whole-grain toast and 100 percent juice
- Fruit and yogurt smoothie with whole-grain toast
- Scrambled eggs stuffed into half a whole-grain pita pocket and topped with shredded cheddar cheese and salsa or ketchup with 100 percent juice
- A waffle sandwich: two whole-grain, toasted waffles spread with almond, peanut or soy nut butters and a glass of milk.

Although breakfast is considered to be the most important meal of the day, parents cannot forget about lunchtime. To ensure your children are getting all the nutrients they need consider these tips when packing their lunchboxes:

- ***Make it colorful!*** Add fruits and vegetables to keep kids energized and ready to learn. Apples, pears, berries, dried fruit, baby carrots and edamame are easy to pack and fun for your kids to eat.
- ***Drink up!*** Making sure your kids stay hydrated throughout the day is key. Limit the amount of soft drinks your kids consume each day and encourage them to drink more juice and water.
- ***A wholesome meal.*** Eating a diet rich in whole-grains is essential for a healthy lifestyle. Make sandwiches on whole-grain bread and pack whole-grain crackers and snack bars in their lunches. When buying whole-grain bread, make sure to check the label for “100 percent whole wheat” in order to get the most nutrients.
- ***Get them MOOving!*** Make sure to add nonfat or low-fat dairy products into your kid’s daily diets to strengthen their bones and their brains. If your kids don’t like milk, try yogurt or flavored milk (with no more than 30 grams of sugar) to get their recommended daily dose.

While schools provide children recess and P.E. classes, sometimes that exercise just isn’t enough. Don’t overestimate the amount of physical exercise your kids may be getting from school: according to a research study conducted by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, only 33% of students attended daily physical education classes in 2009. Encourage them to play outside and participate in fun activities that include lots of running around. Studies show growing kids need to run for at least an hour each day. If schedules don’t allow a full hour of running, try shorter intervals of running and playing throughout the day. But also give your kids time to rest and relax during busy schedules.

Without a healthy diet and exercise, Quorum Health Resources’ Vice President of Clinical Operations Christine Delucas, R.N., explains that children are vulnerable to increased health risks: “Childhood obesity has more than tripled in the past 30 years. The prevalence of obesity among children aged 6 to 11 years increased from 6.5% in 1980 to 19.6% in 2008, and obesity among adolescents aged 12 to 19 years increased from 5.0% to 18.1%.” The U.S. Surgeon General reports that obese youth are more likely to have increased risk factors for cardiovascular disease, bone and joint problems, sleep apnea, poor self esteem, and for becoming an obese adult.

Schools can also be a breeding ground for germs. Make sure your children know how to properly wash their hands by rubbing their hands for at least 20 seconds. Singing “Happy Birthday” while hand washing is an easy way for your kids to know just how long to wash their hands. Also teaching your kids how to cover their noses and mouths when coughing or sneezing will prevent them from spreading germs to other children. If you

kids seem to be under-the-weather, let them stay home. It's better than them going to school spreading germs and picking up some extra ones with their weak immune system.

“Keep your kids and others healthy by teaching your kids healthy habits when coughing and sneezing,” says Brenda Herr. “Schools are already a dangerous area for germs so make sure you send your kids to school knowing how and when to wash their hands.”

Sending your kids off to school can be a chaotic time, but by following these simple tips, you can ensure that your kids will have a healthy and happy school year. And if your kids are happy, you are happy. For more information on back-to-school tips, visit [www.webmd.com](http://www.webmd.com).

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