

# FitFuture

strategies for better living.

Series on Fitness & Nutrition for Families

## SCHOOL BREAKFAST MAKES THE GRADE



The USDA's School Breakfast Program requires that breakfast meet applicable recommendations of the Dietary Guidelines for Americans and provide one-third of the Recommended Dietary Allowances of protein, vitamin A, vitamin C, iron, calcium and calories.



Research shows that participation in a school breakfast program enhanced daily nutrient intake and improvements in nutrient intake were associated with significant improvements in student academic performance, psychosocial functioning and decreases in hunger.<sup>1</sup>

## Breakfast Remains the Most Important Meal of the Day

By Jennifer Kerr, MS, RD

Studies show that children who eat breakfast do better in school. Adults perform better on the job when they make time for breakfast. Now we're finding breakfast plays a very important role in overall health and maintaining a healthy body weight. Unfortunately, breakfast continues to be the meal most neglected by both children and adults.

Children's growing bodies and developing brains require food (energy) at regular intervals. When children skip breakfast, they go far too long without food. This period of semi-starvation leads to hunger pains and an upset stomach, decreased cognitive ability and irritability. It is very difficult for children to meet nutrient requirements for growth and development when a meal is missed.

What we eat is as important as if we eat. Avoid foods like pastries and sugary cereals. These foods offer calories without many essential nutrients. High sugar foods and drinks may also cause your energy to rise briefly before it falls to a low level. Your child may feel more fatigued and hungry if they eat these foods for breakfast.

Make good choices! Choose whole grain breads and cereals, fruits and even foods that are not common breakfast items. Dinner leftovers, a peanut butter sandwich, vegetable soup or hummus on whole wheat toast are all great choices. Choosing high fiber and high protein combinations of foods will give your child longer-lasting energy.

Combine 3 food groups to create a complete breakfast (example: whole grain pita, hummus and an apple).

Keep foods like these on hand and you'll always have the makings of a healthy breakfast:

- Whole grain bread
- Nuts, Peanut butter
- Fruit (fresh/dried/canned)
- Whole grain cereal
- Yogurt
- Hummus
- Cottage Cheese
- Hard boiled eggs

Brought to you by your  
School Food Service Department