

Building Healthy Lifestyles

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YREKA – In honor of National Nutrition Month in March, First 5 Siskiyou wants to offer all parents and caregivers the following quick and easy tips that will help every child grow up healthy.

It is the eating habits children learn when they are very young that will affect their health and nutrition for a lifetime.

Healthy Tips for Feeding Young Children

Make food look good. Children, as well as adults, eat with their eyes first. If the food looks good, your kids will want to try it. Be creative, like topping off a bowl of cereal with a smiley face using bananas for eyes and raisins for a mouth!

Get your children involved! If children are involved in the food shopping and preparation, they are more likely to eat a healthy meal.

Make fruits and vegetables a part of every meal! Children should consume five to nine servings of fruits and vegetables a day, with a single serving equaling the size of a child's fist. Incorporating more fruits and vegetables into your child's diet can be as simple as adding lettuce and tomatoes to a sandwich or offering grapes or other fresh fruit with every meal.

Watch what your kids drink. Sugary beverages, like soda and juice drinks, can increase the risk of tooth decay. Instead, try serving water or milk.

Make healthy snacks. Toddlers and young children eat frequent small meals throughout the day. Give your child nourishing snacks that will give them a burst of energy, like raisins, fresh fruit or vegetables.

Build more physical activity into your child's daily routine. Eating nutritious foods is essential to your child's health, but so is exercise. The U.S. Department of Health & Human Services recommends that children engage in at least 60 minutes of moderate physical activity on most days of the week. Make it fun by playing tag in the backyard or taking your child on a walk around the neighborhood.

Eat Breakfast Every Day

Did you know children who eat breakfast tend to eat healthier overall and can better concentrate in school? Skipping breakfast can make children feel tired, restless or irritable. Help your child start the day off right by offering a quick and easy breakfast such as whole-grain cereal, fruit or yogurt. For days when breakfast is on-the-go, pack some fruit, nuts or whole-grain cereal for your child to eat on the way to school.

Preparing healthy food doesn't take long. In the amount of time it takes to purchase fast food at a drive-thru – about 3 ? minutes – you can prepare a delicious, healthy treat for your child. Try these ideas for small meals that are low in fat, nutritious, and take only a few minutes to prepare:

- Red, orange, yellow and green pepper strips
- Fruit salad made with pineapple chunks, bananas, grapes and berries
- Peanut butter and banana on whole-wheat bread
- Homemade gorp ("good old raisins and peanuts") or trail mix
- Celery or carrots with peanut butter
- Dried fruit
- Guacamole with blue corn chips
- Turkey with lettuce and tomato in a pita pocket
- Yogurt or cottage cheese
- Cubes of low-fat cheese