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PTA Parent

Biweekly Newsletter

Expert advice and practical ideas for raising kids and becoming a vital part of their education.

Tuesday, March 11, 2008

In celebration of March as National Nutrition Month®, this issue of PTA Parent focuses on nutrition and healthy eating. Learn some quick, easy ways to provide nutritious options for your kids.

Small Changes Produce Big Results

National Nutrition Month® reminds us to pay attention to what we eat and how much we eat. Patti Howell, founder and editor of Health-E-tips newsletter, says people can make more healthful choices with very little effort, in most cases. These little changes can produce significant results for you and your family. Here are few ideas from Howell to get you started:



Be Fad-Free — The best path to better nutrition is to be free of fad diets and to choose a plan that is appropriate for lifelong health.

The Eyes Have It — Leave fruit and cut-up vegetables on a plate in plain sight on the counter for easy snack options. Family members are much more likely to grab what they see instead of digging for an alternative from the pantry.

Stick a Fork in It — Keep your dressings on the side. Dip your fork into the dressing first before stabbing the greens. Save hundreds of calories and avoid unwanted fat.

Put Kids In Charge – Get kids involved in the grocery shopping. Let kids pick out their favorite vegetables and help prepare their choices for dinner. They will be very excited to have the whole family eating what they have chosen and prepared.

In This Issue

Nutrition Tips

Healthy Snacks for Kids

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Spanish Resources:
 Promueva estilos de vida saludables en su familia

Look for these articles in an upcoming issue:

Student Achievement

Internet Safety

Get Involved

If you enjoyed an article in *PTA Parent* and want to reprint it for your own use, we encourage you

Switch Hands — Did you know you will snack less when you are munching if you use your non-dominant hand because you will have to think more about what you are doing. Try it.

Count colors not calories — Have at least one fruit and one vegetable that is green, red, purple, orange, and yellow each day.

[Read More](#)

Snacks Can Provide Nutrition Boost

Allrecipes.com, a recipe-sharing site launched in 1997, says snacks can be a part of a child's balanced diet. Healthy snacks can serve as a between-meal pick-me-up for active kids with fast metabolisms and small-capacity tummies, providing them with more energy and ability to concentrate on homework. Here are some healthy



snack ideas gleaned from allrecipes.com's 5 million contributors:

Let Them be Choosy — Provide kids with choices when it comes to snacking. If all the choices you give them are reasonably nutritious ones, then everybody's happy: your kids get to choose their snacks, and you get to ensure that they're eating healthfully.

Take a Dip — Fruits, vegetables, lean protein and low-fat dairy products become instantly appealing when you provide something to dip them in. A cup of ranch dressing made with low-fat ingredients goes with carrot and celery sticks, pepper and cucumber slices, sugar snap peas, and cherry tomatoes. Hummus, bean dip, or salsa are perfect for baked tortilla chips, whole wheat crackers, or pita triangles. Good fruit dips include flavored yogurt, applesauce, low-fat sour cream sweetened with honey or brown sugar, and caramel ice cream topping.

Be Constructive — Let kids construct their snacks and they will be more likely to sample nutritious foods. Use toothpicks to spear melon balls, berries, pineapple chunks, and cubed peaches, pears or apples to make fruit kabobs. Mini

A Healthy Lifestyles Guide for Families

Need help sorting out all of the information out there on health, nutrition, physical activity, etc.? *PTA Healthy Lifestyles: A Parent's Guide* is designed with the busy parent in mind, and is full of up-to-date, to-the-point information on not only nutrition and physical activity, but food marketing, school wellness policies, and more. Visit the [Parent Resources: Health and Wellness](#) section of www.pta.org for a Web-based version of the guide as well as a downloadable PDF.

to do so. Just check out the PTA Permissions Policy.

Join the PTA Reader Panel—share opinions, ideas and comments. E-mail today!

Not a PTA member yet? Join today and help your school help your child!

sandwiches made from crackers or cut-up bread and slices of lunch meat and cheese will be a big hit. Pizza can be a healthy snack—use English muffins for the crust, add tomato sauce, and top with low-fat mozzarella cheese.

The guide is now also available in Spanish!
Click [here](#) to download the Spanish version PDF.

[Read More.](#)

PTA Briefs

Quick Notes

- **Seeking input:** PTA wants to make its publications, both in print and online, valuable to readers. Comments and suggestions on the website or newsletters are welcomed. Respond to this e-mail with your comments or send them to rcraig@pta.org.
 - **Take Your Family to School:** See how schools celebrated PTA Take Your Family to School Week. Visit www.pta.org/familytoschool or the [photo gallery](#) for pictures.
 - **Picture PTA:** The deadline to participate in the Picture PTA contest is **Monday, March 31**. Enter now to win a **\$50 gift card**. Go to [Picture PTA](#).
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What's That Ramona Quimby Up to Now?

In honor of her creator Beverly Cleary's birthday, Ramona Quimby is again leading National D.E.A.R. Day, an annual celebration to encourage families to bond with books.

D.E.A.R. stands for Drop Everything and Read, and families are encouraged to put aside all tasks and other distractions for at least 30 minutes on April 12 to read together. Schools around the country have been participating in D.E.A.R. Day for years, but it isn't just for classrooms! Here are some celebration ideas for your family:

- Go to the library as a family and pick out some new books to read.
- Compare a book with its movie adaptation. Read the book, watch the film, and talk about the similarities and differences.
- Host a themed D.E.A.R. Day dinner party. Prepare a meal based on your chosen book(s) and theme, and after dinner, have everyone read together or have the adults talk about one book while the children discuss another.
- Incorporate the other arts into your reading event. Cast your family as the characters from a favorite childhood book and act out a scene, or create a mural based on a scene from a book.
- Check your local newspaper or community calendar for reading

events at libraries, museums, bookstores, community centers, etc.

For more D.E.A.R. activity ideas, [go online](#).

Spring into PTA Three for Me

Are you feeling energized by the first signs of spring? Put that energy to use for your child's school, and fulfill your Three for Me commitment!



- If you have time during the day to help out at the school, ask teachers and school staff whether there are any children who need assistance in reading or math, or preparing for tests.
- If you are not able to volunteer during school hours, talk to your PTA about helping promote upcoming events by creating and/or distributing fliers, making phone calls, or sending e-mails.
- Talk to your boss and coworkers about what your company can do to support the school such as mentoring, donating supplies or money, or participating in a schoolwide spring cleanup.

There are many ways to give three hours to school-related activities—from home, at the school, or in the community. And in those three hours, you can benefit the entire school and student body and show your children how much you value their education.

PTA Book Club: Child and Teen Nutrition

The American Dietetic Association maintains a list of nutrition books covering various categories. The following are some suggested titles addressing the nutrition needs of young children and teenagers.

Feed Your Family Right!: How to Make Smart Food and Fitness Choices for a Healthy Lifestyle
by Elisa Zied, MS, RD with Ruth Winter, MS. Wiley, 2007.
Being in tune with your family's tastes and genetics can help you plan for them to eat well and also create some fitness fun.

Weight Loss Confidential: How Teens Lose Weight and Keep It Off – and What They Wish Parents Knew
by Anne M. Fletcher, MS, RD. Houghton Mifflin, 2006.
An inspiring book with real-life stories for overweight teenagers who face this challenge...and the parents who love them.

Meals without Squeals: Child Care Feeding Guide & Cookbook, 3rd Edition
by Christine Berman, MPH, RD and Jacki Fromer. Bull Publishing Company, 2006.

Completely revised and updated child care feeding guide and cookbook. This book is designed to help with sound nutrition information, good tasting food and timely advice about children and food.

How to Teach Nutrition to Kids, 3rd Edition

by Connie Liakos Evers, MS, RD. 24 Carrot Press, 2006.

Creative ideas for parents and teachers who want to encourage children to select foods that are good for them. Hundreds of activities aimed at children ages 6-12.

For more book suggestions, go to www.eatright.org.

100 Ways to Help Your Child and School Succeed

There are many ways that you can help your child succeed! A few small activities each week will pay huge dividends over the course of the year. Here are a few that you can do this week:

Work with others to develop volunteer job descriptions and evaluations.

Trabaje con otras personas para desarrollar descripciones de trabajos voluntarios y evaluaciones de quienes participan en estos.

Assist school staff in recruiting parents and community members as volunteers.

Ayude al personal de la escuela a seleccionar padres y miembros de la comunidad como voluntarios.

2008 Sprint Ahead for Education Grants Announced

Through the Sprint Ahead for Education grant program, the Sprint Foundation will accept applications for Character Education programs that promote youth leadership, youth volunteerism, school pride and a positive school culture. With a national reach, the program is open to all U.S. public schools (K-12) and U.S. public school districts.

The Sprint Ahead for Education initiative will award individual school grants up to \$5,000 and school district grants up to \$25,000. In 2008 the Sprint Foundation plans to award up to \$600,000 in combined grants to schools and school districts. The grant application period will run from March 3-April 15 2008. Applications for funding must be [submitted online](#). Sprint was the recipient of PTA's 2006 Commitment to America's Children Award.

PTA In the News

- [Daylight saving time should be dumped](#)
- [Tired of catalogs, schools seek new ways of fundraising](#)
- [First-Ever National Board Certification® for America's Health](#)

[Educators Arrives](#)

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