NEW SCHOOL LUNCH STANDARDS

If you’ve ever heard the saying "Eat the Rainbow," it's a simple reminder to eat a variety of colorful fruits and vegetables each day. Eating food of different colors is an easy way to get all the vitamins, minerals, and fiber our bodies need. Limiting fats, sugar and salt reduces the risk of weight gain, and poor health. As a general rule, make fruits and vegetables part of a healthy plate every day and eat less, fat, sugar and salt.

School-aged children across the nation have the option to eat the rainbow and eat healthier as a result of new school lunch standards. The final standards include the following:

- Fruits and vegetables served each day.
- More whole grain foods.
- Serving fat-free and low-fat milk.
- Child-sized portions.
- Less fat and salt in school meals.

The new standards will effect school breakfast, lunch and vending machines. The standards first went into effect July 1, 2012 and schools were given three years to phase-in the changes, starting with the 2012-2013 school year. These new school meal standards will greatly impact the health and nutrition of school children across the nation. Parents can get involved by reading the school lunch menu with their kids and talking about the healthy foods listed. Parents will also play an important role in this national effort as role models. Set an example for your children and show them the importance of eating the rainbow!

Source: http://eatsmartmd.blogspot.com/2013_08_01_archive.html
BACK-TO-SCHOOL: LUNCHBOX FOOD SAFETY

Fall means back-to-school, and a classroom refresher on the basic rules of lunchbox food safety. Foodborne illness is highly preventable, yet each year it is estimated that 1:6 Americans acquire a foodborne illness. Young children (0-5yrs) represent one population known to be more vulnerable to foodborne illness because their immune system is still developing.

As the child’s caregiver there are important steps you can take to send your child off to school with the safest possible lunch.

1. Teach your child when and how to properly wash their hands
2. Keep cold foods cold and hot foods hot
3. Prevent cross-contamination

Handwashing

Handwashing is the easiest way to prevent the spread of viruses and bacteria. There are many situations when it is important to wash your hands, but talk to your child so they know that it is very important to wash before they eat their lunch or have a classroom snack.

If hand washing with soap and water is not available, an alcohol-based sanitizer containing 60% alcohol is supported by the Center for Disease Control (CDC).

Keep hot foods hot, and cold foods cold

Keeping cold foods cold
Bacteria grow best between 41-140°F. This temperature range is known as the “Danger Zone.” Keep cold-packed lunches at or below 40°F to slow bacterial growth.

- Keep lunches in a refrigerator if available at school.
- Use an insulated lunchbox.
- Buy milk at school.
- Freeze sandwiches.
- Include a frozen gel pack or freeze juice boxes or a plastic water bottle in your child’s lunch.

**Perishable food that is transported without an ice source will stay safe for only 2 hours. If the temperature is ABOVE 90°F, only 1 hour.**

**Keeping hot foods hot**
Keep hot-packed lunches at or above 140°F.
- Reheat leftovers to 165°F in the microwave, if one is available at your child’s school.
- Use an insulated container to keep hot foods at or above 140°F.

**Prevent Lunchbox Cross-Contamination**
Cross-contamination is how bacteria can spread from one surface to another surface that did not previously contain that bacteria. An example of cross-contamination would be when someone is handling raw meat with *E. coli* on it, forgets to wash their *E. coli* covered hands, then touches the salad greens, and now the salad greens are contaminated with *E. coli*.

**Lunchbox cross-contamination can be avoided by:**
- Regularly washing insulated lunchboxes.
- At lunchtime, discarding all used food packaging and paper bags. Reusing such packaging could contaminate other food(s) and cause foodborne illness.
- Washing hands.
- Washing whole fruits and vegetables prior to consumption.

**References:**
http://www.foodsafety.wisc.edu/assets/pdf_Files/keeping_bag_lunch_safe.pdf
www.scrubclub.org
Factsheet PM3026: http://www.extension.iastate.edu/foodsafety/
http://extension.umd.edu/foodsafety/consumer-home-food-safety/personal-hygiene
fightbac.org
Huang et al., 2012
Scallan et al., 2011

**START EVERY DAY WITH BREAKFAST!**

**Choose healthy foods from each food group to:**
- Help children do better in school.
- Give you energy to stay active.
- Give you nutrients to stay healthy.

**No time to make breakfast? Try one of these breakfast ideas for a quick meal on the run.**
- Whole grain tortilla with banana and peanut butter
- Yogurt with dry whole-grain cereal on top
• Trail mix with cereal, nuts, and raisins in a snack bag and a glass of low-fat milk
• Scrambled egg with low-fat cheese on a whole grain bagel
• Oatmeal in a cup with dried fruit and nuts on top
• Fruit smoothie blended with low-fat yogurt or milk

This quick and easy smoothie recipe makes a great breakfast-on-the-go. It is also perfect for after-school snacks.

**Breakfast Smoothie** (Serves 1)

**Ingredients**
- 1/2 cup low-fat milk (1% or fat free)
- 3-5 frozen strawberries
- 1/2 banana
- Ice Cubes

**Directions**
1. Place the milk, strawberries, and half a banana in a blender. Blend for 30 seconds.
2. Enjoy your drink with a whole wheat bagel. You can choose any combination of your favorite fresh or frozen fruits or 100% fruit juice.

*Source: http://eatsmartmd.blogspot.com/2013_09_01_archive.html*

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**LET’S TALK FAMILY CONVERSATION STARTERS**

Strong families are based on good communication. Each month we will provide some good conversation starters for you to use with your children or the children in your care. These starters can help to begin a discussion and are much more effective than asking “how was your day?” The idea is to increase communication while getting to know each other better and sharing family values at the same time.

Some ideas for August:
- August is national smile month. How many have you shared today?
- If a friend gets something new, do you expect something new also?
- What is your favorite cartoon or TV show and why?
- Pretend you are an animal, what is it and why?
- Tell me a funny joke or quote
- What is your favorite amusement park? Your favorite ride?
- If you were an Olympic sports champion, in what sport would you like to win a medal?
- Should families put a limit on the amount of time they are allowed to talk on the phone?

*Source: The Ohio State University Extension*

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**FOOD PANTRY STAPLES: PROCESSED FOODS**

There is a lot of advice about eating healthy. Some of the advice is good. A lot is not so good. It is hard to know how to eat in a healthy way!

**What is Processed Food?**

You hear a lot about processed foods. Processed foods are foods that have been changed from the way they grew naturally. Processing makes them safer or easier to cook and serve.

We often think of processed food as bad. But some processing is helpful to us. For example, sometimes the price of fresh vegetables is too high. Frozen (processed) vegetables are cheaper, have important nutrients, and are easy to cook.
Some processed foods are not good choices. They have too much fat, salt, and sugar. Eating foods with too much of these ingredients is linked to diabetes, heart disease, and other health problems.

Shopping for Healthy Food

Here are some ideas for choosing healthy food.

- In most grocery stores, the healthiest foods are on the outside aisles, and the more processed foods are on the middle aisles. On the outside aisles, you will find fresh fruits and vegetables, milk, fish and meat. Some of the foods are processed too, so be sure to read the labels. Look for foods that do not have so many ingredients on the label. And look for low fat, low sodium and low sugar foods.
- Buy fresh fruits and vegetables when you can. They are not processed. And they usually have the most nutrients and best flavor. Frozen fruits and vegetables are the next best choice. The price of canned fruits and vegetables is usually lower than fresh or frozen. If you buy canned, choose low salt products and rinse them before cooking to remove the salt in the juice.
- Shop at farm stands and farmers’ markets. Even better, grow fruits and vegetables in your own containers or garden. Choose many colors of fruits and vegetables. The more colors, the better the nutrition.
- Look for breads and cereals made with whole grains. Read the label to find the foods with whole grains listed in the beginning of the ingredient list.

Food Rules

Michael Pollan has written many books and articles about how to eat healthy. One of his rules about choosing less processed foods is: "Don't eat anything your great grandmother wouldn't recognize." from Food Rules by Michael Pollan

TEX-MEX PASTA SALAD

What You Need:
1 (12 oz.) package pasta
3 tbsp. light mayonnaise
1 ½ cups frozen yellow corn, defrosted
1 ¼ cups salsa
1 (15 oz.) can black beans, rinsed and drained
¼ cup chopped fresh cilantro
1/8 tsp ground cumin, optional
1 ½ cups reduced fat shredded cheddar cheese

Directions:
Cook pasta according to package directions.
Drain, run under cold water, and drain well.
Put into a large bowl. Stir in remaining ingredients.
Serve chilled or at room temperature.

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*Percent Daily Values are based on a 2,000 calorie diet. Your daily values may be higher or lower depending on your calorie needs.

Calories per gram:
Fat 9 | Carbohydrate 4 | Protein 4
HEALTH INSURANCE ENROLLMENT CHECKLIST

It’s that time again. For many families, fall is the time to re-enroll in health insurance. While many will not enroll until October, now is the time to begin examining how well your plan has worked for you. Below is a checklist of what you should start gathering now so you know what you need in a plan:

Prepare to Make a Smart Choice Health Insurance Decision Check list

- Know when your open enrollment starts and ends!
- Make a list of the benefits you used and those you didn’t!
- Ask your doctor(s) for a printout of how often you went there in the past year and how much it cost.
- Contact your local pharmacy for a print out of the medicines you took and how much it cost.
- Ask if your company provides flexible spending accounts. This is a way to pay for health expenses with pre-tax dollars, which will save you and your family money!

HEALTHY TEETH FOR LIFE: 10 TIPS

You have so many good reasons to keep your family’s teeth and gums healthy. Their sparkling smiles. Being able to chew for good nutrition. Avoiding toothaches and discomfort. And new research suggests that gum disease can lead to other problems in the body, including increased risk of heart disease.

Fortunately, there are simple ways to keep teeth strong and healthy from childhood to old age. Here’s how:

1. **Start children early.** “Dental care should begin as soon as a child’s first tooth appears, usually around six months,” Caryn Solie, RDH, president of the American Dental Hygienists’ Association, tells WebMD. “Teeth can be wiped with a clean, damp cloth or a very soft brush. At about age 2, you can let kids try brushing for themselves -- although it’s important to supervise.”

2. **Seal off trouble.** Permanent molars come in around age 6. Thin protective coatings applied to the chewing surfaces of the back teeth can prevent decay in the pits and fissures.

3. **Use enough -- but not too much -- fluoride.** The single biggest advance in oral health has been fluoride, which strengthens enamel, making it less likely to decay.

4. **Brush twice a day and floss daily.** Gum disease and tooth decay remain big problems -- and not just for older people. Three-fourths of teenagers have gums that bleed, according to the ADHA.

5. **Rinse or chew gum after meals.** In addition to brushing and flossing, rinsing your mouth with an antibacterial rinse can help prevent decay and gum problems. Chewing sugar-free gum after a meal can also protect by increasing saliva flow, which naturally washes bacteria away and neutralizes acid.

6. **Block blows to teeth.** Sports and recreational activities build healthy bodies, but they can pose a threat to teeth. Most school teams now require children to wear mouth guards. But remember: unsupervised recreational activities like skate-boarding and roller-blading can also result in injuries. Your dentist can make a custom-fitted mouth guard. Another option: buy a mouth guard at a sporting goods store that can be softened using hot water to form fit your mouth.

7. **Don’t smoke or use smokeless tobacco.** Tobacco stains teeth and significantly increases the risk of gum disease and oral cancer. If you smoke or use chewing tobacco, consider quitting. Counsel your kids not to start.
8. Eat smart. At every age, a healthy diet is essential to healthy teeth and gums. A well-balanced diet of whole foods -- including grains, nuts, fruits and vegetables, and dairy products -- will provide all the nutrients you need.

9. Avoid sugary foods. When bacteria in the mouth break down simple sugars, they produce acids that can erode tooth enamel, opening the door to decay. Sticky candies are another culprit, because they linger on teeth surfaces.

10. Make an appointment. Most experts recommend a dental check-up every 6 months -- more often if you have problems like gum disease. During a routine exam, your dentist or dental hygienist removes plaque build-up that you can’t brush or floss away and look for signs of decay.

SERIOUS ALLERGIES: KEEPING YOUR TEEN SAFE

It can be challenging to have a food allergy as a teen. Some feel embarrassed to eat differently than their friends, or to ask for special meals, or to pass when everyone else is eating something they can't.

In one survey, teenagers with food allergies admitted that they sometimes take risks with their food, particularly when they were out with friends. That's rare, says pediatric allergist Jacqueline Eghrari-Sabet, MD. "In my experience, kids with severe allergies tend to be very mature and cautious."

Where Eghrari-Sabet sees her teenage patients with food allergies getting into trouble, she says, is if they also have asthma. If they do, taking care of their asthma may help them avoid severe reactions to their allergy trigger foods.

Involve Your Teen

The teen years are a time of growing up. That includes taking care of their health. These simple strategies can help:

- **Manage asthma.** This is especially important if your teen has serious allergies. Make sure your child takes her daily maintenance medication and gets regular checkups. If your teen needs to use her rescue inhaler all the time, her asthma is out of control.
- **Talk about it.** This isn't about having one big talk, but about having many talks that prepare your teen for being on her own. Parents should teach kids how to read food labels, make smart decisions at grocery stores and restaurants, recognize symptoms, and when to call 911. It should be an ongoing educational process.
- **Empower your teen.** Teach them what to do when you're not around. Brainstorm together about how to handle tricky situations and role-play different scenarios. For instance, help your teen create "chef cards" that explain his allergy, and encourage him to talk about it with waiters, chefs, and restaurant managers when you go out to eat.
- **Find a good allergist.** This should be someone you and your teen trusts and feels comfortable with. Your teen should get regular checkups to manage allergies, update medications, and learn about what he or she needs to do for their own self-care.
- **Help your teen find peer support.** A support group for people with food allergies can help you and your teen get connected to other people facing the same challenges.
- **Model good judgment, not fear.** If you're careful but calm, your teen will have a good role model in how they can approach their allergy with wisdom instead of worry.

Adapted from http://www.webmd.com/allergies/anaphylaxis-13/teens-high-risk
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