

# The Health Letter

News for People, Families, Communities: Focus on Parents and Schools

CHEC

## Parents Help Set Healthy Habits

**Help your child do well in school and stay healthy with this Back to School Health Checklist.**

Your child needs you to help him or her start healthy habits that will last a lifetime.

### Back to School Health Checklist:

*Healthy study habits* help your child succeed in school and reduce stress:

#### ✓ Set up a study space

Find a desk or corner of a table that is free. Set up pencils, erasers and a bottle of water for a drink. Making a special homework spot will help get it done.

#### ✓ Set up a study time

Talk with your child and find a time that will work for starting homework. Right after school? After some playtime? After supper? Find a time that works for your family and stick to it.

#### ✓ Tame the TV

TV takes time from play that helps children grow in body and mind. It takes time from homework. Set limits. Limit TV time to one hour or less on school days. No TV during meals or homework time. Limit what they watch as well—help them choose shows with no violence and commercials. Stick to your rules: it will help your child do better in school.

#### ✓ Read to your child

Set time aside to read with your child each day. This could be at bedtime or when everyone gets home after work or school. Read a book to your child, and have them read to you. This will help your child's reading and writing. It will help them make reading a part of their lives.

#### ✓ Sleep

Set a regular bedtime that leaves enough sleep time for your child. See sleep recommendations for different ages in the box to the right.

### How Much Sleep Do They Need?

**4 to 8 year olds** usually need about 12 hours of sleep a night.  
*4 to 6 year olds may also need a nap during the day.*

**8 to 12 year olds** usually need 10 to 11 hours of sleep a night.  
*A bedtime of 8:00 or 9:00 can work well for this age.*

**Teenagers** love to sleep. They may need more sleep at this age.  
*Help teens learn to go to bed early. Have them set their own alarm clocks.*



PHOTO: C. Retzlaff, c. 2002

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## Healthy Snacks for the Whole Family!

**#1** Keep fresh fruit in the fridge. Try one new fruit your family has never had each month.

**#2** Ants on a log: Cut celery stalks into sticks. Spread peanut butter in the "crack in the log." Press raisins in a line along the peanut butter. Eat up the ants!

**#3** Pop big bags of popcorn instead of buying chips. Go easy on the salt and butter. Try adding nutritional yeast (sometimes called Brewer's yeast) for a tasty and healthy sprinkle.

**#4** Pack baggies of healthy breakfast cereals for car snacks.

**#5** Family smoothie night: Set out favorite fruits, juices, yogurt (plain without sugar) and ice. Let everyone make their own flavor smoothie in the blender (with adult help).

### The Health Letter

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**Healthy eating habits** keep a child's body and mind ready to learn:

#### ✓ Breakfast

Make sure your child has breakfast every day before school! Healthy breakfast foods include: cereal without a lot of sugar, fruit juices, yogurt, eggs, beans, whole grain toast and tortillas.

#### ✓ Lunch

Talk with your child about choosing a healthy lunch at school. An important rule is to always take a vegetable and always eat at least part of the serving. Set limits on buying vending machine or lunchroom treats. You might agree on one sugary treat one day a week.

#### ✓ Snacks

The trick to getting kids into a healthy snack habit is to keep only healthy snacks in the house. Stop buying soda, chips and sugary snacks. Stock up on healthy treats. (Check out the box on the left for ideas!)

#### ✓ Dinner

Remember your food groups. Include in every meal vegetables and a protein (lean meat, nuts, fish, cheese, eggs, tofu, beans). Use whole grain breads, crackers and pasta. Consider a dessert of fresh or frozen fruit.

#### ✓ Exercise

Good eating habits go with regular exercise to make healthy bodies. Make sure your child does something active every day. Go for family walks or bike rides. Have a game of frisbee or soccer in the park.

**Being safe.** Injuries are the most common cause of death for children of all ages! Help your child stay safe to and from school:

#### ✓ Buckle up in cars

Make seat belts and car seats a family habit.

#### ✓ Model safe driving

Your children who will be driving soon are watching you. Obey speed limits and traffic rules.

#### ✓ Watch out for cars!

Teach your child to look both ways and hold hands with an adult when crossing the street. Stress not to follow a ball or toy into the street.

#### ✓ Bike and skate safely

Buy your child a helmet and knee and elbow pads. Teach bikers hand signals. Bikes need lights and reflectors.

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