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HealthyLiving

Tips for a Healthier School Year

Whether you welcome it with glee (no more kids in the house!) or feel a twinge of dread (goodbye, lazy days by the pool), school is starting up again. We’ve compiled some tips to help you start the year off right.

Make sure your child’s vaccinations are up-to-date.

Getting your kids vaccinated protects them against diseases, including common seasonal diseases such as influenza. To find out which ones they need and when they should get them, take a look at the schedule outlined by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

Encourage healthy eating habits.

Eating right doesn’t mean putting your kids on a diet – just make some small changes. Pack lunches and plan menus around fruits, veggies, and whole grains; limit sugary, salty, and high-fat snacks; and tweak your favorite family recipes to make them a little healthier. For example, instead of serving fried chicken, try oven-fried chicken nuggets (see recipe in this issue).

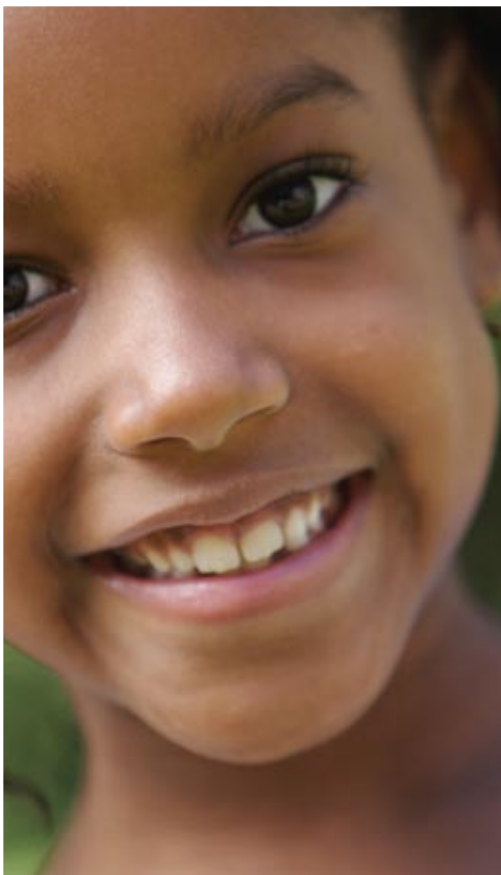
Offer your kids a high protein breakfast that’ll keep them satisfied until lunch-time – a scrambled egg or peanut butter on toast, for example. Pack lunches with low-fat snacks such as fruit, low-fat string cheese, or applesauce. If your child has a favorite after-school treat, look for single-serving packages.

Help them stay active.

The American Cancer Society recommends children and teens participate in at least 60 minutes of moderate intensity physical activity on most days of the week, preferably daily.

Encourage your kids to try a new sport. Take walks and bike rides as a family. Plan family vacations around activities like hiking or swimming. Limit sedentary activities like computer games and TV.

Perhaps the most important thing you can do to help your kids stay healthy is to set an example. If you’re eating right and exercising regularly, chances are they will too.



For more food and fitness ideas, [*click here.*](#)



Menu Planning Done Right



Today's hectic pace can make it difficult to sit down and enjoy a healthy meal. Yet with a little planning, you can make dinnertime a less stressful, and hopefully healthier, event.

Grab a pencil, sit down, and plan your meals for the upcoming week. Ask for input from your family, or go through healthy cookbooks, such as *The American Cancer Society's Healthy Living Cookbook*, for inspiration. Think about how you can get as much mileage as possible out of a single ingredient. For example, you can use spinach for a side salad one night and as filling for a healthy vegetable lasagna another night.

When possible, make fruits and veggies the star of your dishes; let lean proteins

play the supporting role. Buy in bulk – you'll save money and have leftovers you can freeze for later. Think about ways you can make your dishes flavorful yet still healthful. For example, choose a sharp cheese so you can use less without compromising taste.

And finally, when you have a plan, post it on the fridge so you're guaranteed to stick to it.

With a little preparation, you and your family can enjoy tasty, healthful meals all week. Goodbye, drive-through!



[CLICK HERE](#) for more healthy eating tips.

Think Outside the Box for Family Game Night

Lots of families set aside one night a week to spend time together playing games – charades, cards, you name it. Why not think outside the box for your next family game night? Instead of pulling out a board game, do something physically active together.

Grab the kids and shoot some hoops in the driveway or bat around a Wiffle ball. Play a game of tag or have a jump rope contest. On a hot summer night, head to the local pool and start up a game of Marco Polo or water volleyball.

If you can't get outside, challenge your kids to a few rounds of an exercise-based video game like Dance Dance Revolution. These games are so good at getting the heart pumping that schools across the United States are even using them in PE class.

Incorporating exercise into family traditions is a great way to spend quality time together while doing something good for your body, too.

Plus, the family that plays together ... has a lot of fun!



BMI: What Your Number Means

Looking for a better measure of health than just the number on your scale? The body mass index (BMI) is a tool you can use to figure out whether your weight is healthy. It's based on a ratio of your height and weight.

Generally, a BMI below 18.5 means you're underweight. A BMI within 18.5 and 24.9 is considered normal weight, while a BMI that falls between 25-29.9 means you're overweight. If your number is 30 or higher, you're considered obese.

Having a high BMI increases your risk for serious health problems, from diabetes to heart disease. People who are overweight or obese have a greater chance of developing certain cancers – including breast cancer for women past menopause, and colorectal cancer – as well as high blood pressure, high blood cholesterol, and stroke.

However, as with any tool, it isn't perfect. The BMI may not be accurate for athletes with greater muscle mass or older adults with less, for example. It also doesn't take into account other indicators of health, such as waist size, cholesterol, and blood sugar levels.

Looking to lower that BMI? The American Cancer Society has tools and information that can help you stay well and live a healthier life. Visit cancer.org for more information.



CLICK HERE to
calculate your BMI.

Healthy Relationships, Healthy Body

Let's face it: even the happiest couples argue sometimes. It's part of being in a healthy relationship. However, if your relationship is plagued by poor communication, misunderstandings, and resentments, it can take a toll on your well-being.

Relationship stress can trigger an increase in the amount of the hormone cortisol in your bloodstream, which puts you at a greater risk for heart disease, sleep problems, digestive problems, and depression.

How you handle conflict can make all the difference in your health. Try these tips.

Listen. Hear your partner out without interrupting or getting defensive, which often escalate the argument in an unproductive way.

Stay focused. Don't bring up the past. Focus instead on finding a solution to the issue at hand.



Use "I" statements. This allows you to communicate your concerns without making the other person defensive.

Forget about "winning." Effective communication is about finding a solution that works for both parties.

Ask for help. If you're forever talking in circles and you're both getting hurt, consider therapy. An impartial party can see communication patterns and help you find more effective tools for handling conflict.

What Your Teeth Say About Your Health



What do your pearly whites say about you? Maybe they say you do a great job brushing and flossing regularly. Then again, maybe they say it's been ages since they last saw that dentist.

Your teeth could also be warning you of potential health problems. Some research suggests that there may be a link between advanced gum disease and heart disease,

while other studies have found pregnant women with advanced gum disease are more likely to deliver pre-term and low-birth babies. There's also evidence that people with diabetes may be more likely to develop gum disease. Researchers are still investigating these links. Mouth sores, pain, or loose teeth could also be signs of oral cancer, or other, less serious, conditions.

Taking good care of your teeth is undoubtedly an important part of your overall health. If you can't eat properly, you can't get the nutrition you need.

The American Dental Association recommends good daily oral hygiene (brushing and flossing) and regular professional care. Further, the ADA recommends staying away from smoking and illicit drugs, which can wreck a healthy smile.

Crunchy “Oven-Fried” Chicken Nuggets

- 10 classic or whole-grain Melba toasts (2 pouches)
- 1 tablespoon canola oil*
- 1 egg
- 1 teaspoon Dijon mustard
- 1/4 teaspoon dried oregano
- 1/4 teaspoon salt
- 1/4 teaspoon garlic powder
- 1 pound boneless, skinless chicken breasts, cut into 2-inch “nuggets”

Preheat the oven to 400 degrees. Place a cooling rack on a rimmed baking sheet.

In a food processor, pulse the Melba toast until pieces are about 1/8 inch in size, with some smaller and larger pieces. Don't overprocess. Add oil and pulse once or twice, or until crumbs are just moistened. (You can also use a rolling pin or a meat mallet to crush the toasts in a zip-top bag. Then mix the oil and crumbs together in a bowl.) Transfer crumbs to a plate.

In a bowl, beat the egg. Add mustard, oregano, salt, and garlic powder and beat to combine. Dip chicken in egg mixture, then in crumbs, pressing to coat all sides of the meat. Place on the rack.

Bake for 15 minutes, or until cooked through.

* Canola oil (and olive oil, too) is high in oleic acid, a monounsaturated fatty acid that can help reduce low-density lipoproteins (or LDL – the “bad cholesterol”) without lowering high-density lipoproteins (or HDL – the “good cholesterol”).

Serves 4.

Approximate per serving: 230 calories; 8 grams of fat



CLICK HERE to order *The American Cancer Society's Great American Eat-Right Cookbook*.

Chicken: *Tasty, Versatile, Easy – and Good for You!*

When it comes to variety, it's hard to beat chicken. The menu mainstay is at home in cuisines from around the world, whether it's roasted, grilled, fricasseed, or of course – fried.

As with all foods, the key is to think healthy. But that doesn't mean you have to give up the finger-licking qualities of fried chicken. Why not choose to oven “fry” your bird instead? You'll get a nice crunch without the extra fat (see accompanying recipe).

At home or in a restaurant, options like roasted, baked, or broiled chicken are healthy – and tasty – choices, while breaded, battered, and pan-fried dishes can have hidden calories and probably aren't the best option.

In addition to preparation, portion size also is crucial to keeping chicken a healthy choice. For an entrée, you should have approximately 3 ounces of meat, which is about the size of a deck of cards.

When you buy fresh chicken at the grocery store, the USDA Food Safety and Inspection Service recommends using it within one or two days. Freezing also is an option – either in the original packaging or repackaged. Leftovers and takeout chicken keep well for three to four days, while chicken salad and deli-sliced luncheon meat will last approximately three to five days.

In the Next Issue:

- When to Buy Organic • Designing a Healthier Work Station • Understanding Portion Sizes



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