



Extension News Column

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Date: Aug. 17, 2011
To: Mary Beth Smetzer, community news editor, News-Miner, 459-7546 (wk), 452-7917 (fax), mismetzer@newsminer.com, and people@newsminer.com
From: Roxie Dinstel
Re: Regular CES column to run Tuesday, Aug. 23, on Our Town page

Additional

Contact: Debbie Carter, information officer, 474-5406, dscarter@alaska.edu

School has started. Though the summer always feels too short, the kids are back at their desks and learning. Make sure your kids are healthy and well nourished so they will be ready to learn.

Schools are making sure children have healthy food options during the day, and parents should do their part to see that healthy eating continues at home. Be sure to stock healthy snack and supper options at home.

A refrigerator and cupboard full of sweets and unhealthy food choices make it easy for a child or an adult to make unwise food choices. We all know how hard it is to resist the call of the potato chips, so simply don't bring the wrong stuff home. Not that there aren't some unhealthy snacks in my cabinet, but there are lots of healthy foods there as well. Stock up with fresh fruits, vegetables and high fiber foods. Add yogurt and cheese from the dairy group, as well as nuts and peanut (almond, cashew or other nut) butter and you are ready to deal with the munchies at the end of the day.

Carefully chosen snacks are a good way for a person to meet their recommended daily intake of fruits, vegetables and whole grains. Make it easy to eat right. Cut up fruits and vegetables and have them ready for quick consumption. If they have to be peeled and cut, chances are you are going to opt for the chips. Those prepared vegetable snack trays are great, but quite expensive. Prepare your own and set it in the refrigerator for easy access.

Consider this "recipe" for a healthy snack. Choose two of the following four foods for an after-school snack: milk; fruit or vegetable juice; cereal or bread; and meat or meal alternative.

Healthy snacks could be juice and wheat crackers, watermelon and soft pretzels, milk and oatmeal cookies, kiwi fruit and a bagel, and baked apples and cheese cubes. Simpler snacks include milk and cereal, peanut butter and apples, cheese and crackers, and carrot

sticks and low-fat dressing. Do not serve milk and juice together for a snack and do not choose two foods from the same category as a snack.

The real problem is that we have a growing level of obesity. Obesity is a problem caused by a lack of activity and poor eating choices. It is important to make sure kids have nutritious foods, but also that they get moving.

Make sure your child has something active to do when they get home from school. They may be able to go to a park, play in the backyard, or stay inside and do some chores — just make sure they don't sit idle all evening.

Here in Alaska, cold weather makes it a bit more difficult. Dancing, exercise or simply running around the room will keep kids active. Do a scavenger hunt where kids have to hunt for items, dance through the commercials or play active games. These activities can help you and your children stay active.

When choosing snacks, be sure to read labels on the foods you buy. Many of the convenience foods and typical snack foods are high in fat. Also, check the level of sugar on the product. If the snack says low fat, make sure the manufacturer didn't increase the sugar. Read labels and know what you are getting. Don't just trust the health claims on the box.

While healthy snacks are best, sweets are okay in moderation when balanced with physical activity. Don't make sweets the "bad guy." I like to tell people that there are "sometimes" foods (cookies) and "all time" foods (fruits). Just make sure your family gets more of the "all time" foods.

While you are remaking your kids' snacks, take a look at what you are eating. We should lead by example.

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