



The Wellness Family

Dr. John Ferguson Keeps You Informed

School Smarts

It's that time of year again: shopping for school clothes and school supplies, getting ready for after-school activities and making sure to have everything necessary to prepare good, healthy lunches. It can get a little overwhelming. Here are just a few recommendations for a great school year.

Food Smarts

The first concern for a healthy school year is going to be dietary. According to recent studies, two out of three middle school students who eat school lunches regularly are overweight or obese, and additional statistics show they may have higher bad cholesterol or LDL as opposed to children who bring their own lunches from home.

According to Elizabeth Jackson, MD, MPH, assistant professor of internal medicine at the University of Michigan Health System in Ann Arbor, unhealthy school lunch statistics will continue to climb as the efforts of schools to provide healthier lunch menus to students have a long way to go. Adding a piece of fruit to a school lunch isn't going to make a major difference when children are not eating enough green vegetables. The natural sugar in fruit is still sugar.

Additionally, the effects of poor nutrition from school lunches go way beyond just weight gain. A child who eats too much fat, sugar, sodium or processed food and too few vitamins and minerals is more likely over time to develop a higher risk for several weight-related chronic health problems. These might include diabetes, kidney stones, bone loss, cancer and heart disease. It's not just the sedentary children at risk, either; active kids who need more calories than the federal limits are in danger of possibly feeling weak, fatigued or nauseous during sports and exercise.

The only true way to be sure that your child is eating a healthy lunch is to provide that lunch yourself, making sure to include fruits, vegetables and proteins in a well-balanced nutritional combination. Of course, this doesn't mean that your child can't have a cafeteria lunch on occasion, but it's not wise to trust the school to provide your child the nutritional balance he or she needs to get through the day.

Consider limiting your child to a cafeteria lunch one day a week. Since most schools provide a menu, pick the one day each week that the menu offers the most variety of high-protein and fiber rich foods and avoid the saturated fats and carbohydrates. The rest of the week, be sure to make a lunch that has great protein sources, vegetables and no pre-packaged junk foods.

Your child's friends may come to school with the latest lunch fads but it's important for your child to eat healthy. If a

lunch bag has one candy, one bag of chips and one package of cookies with a peanut butter and jelly sandwich on white bread, that child will be consuming over 1,000 calories in one sitting. The average child needs between 1,800 and 2,000 calories per day depending upon their activity level that is supposed to be divided between 3 meals and 2 snacks.



A few extra minutes today can mean the difference in having a safe and healthy school year.

Smart Hydration

Remember when preparing that lunch that it's important for a child to stay hydrated. The best source of hydration is going to be water in a BPA-free bottle. Stainless steel will typically be best but options for BPA-free plastic bottles are increasing. Be sure to fill it up at home each day, understanding that the tap water at many schools will include fluoride and its best to avoid drinking tap water as much as possible.

A Good Night's Sleep

All healthcare professionals agree that sleep is important for a child's health. A lack of good REM sleep can have negative emotional and mental effects. Depending upon your child's age it's important for school-age children to get anywhere from 9-11 hours of sleep each night. A child in elementary school should be sleeping between 10 and 11 hours each night and the average teen should sleep between 9 and 10 hours each night. Less than this may affect their overall health. The right amount of sleep promotes alertness, memory and performance. Children who get enough sleep are more likely to function better and less prone to behavioral problems and moodiness.

The biggest challenge to sleep tends to be over-scheduling. In many modern homes both parents work, this results in children being in daycare or after-school activities until around 5 PM. Sports, cheerleading, music programs and other extra-curricular activities may have the family not arriving home until well after 7 PM. Once dinner and homework is finished, many children are not getting in bed

until well past 9:00 or closer to 10:00. If that same child must rise by 6:00 to get ready for school, well, you can see the problem.

With today's over-scheduled, over-active youth, it's a lot harder to get a good 8 hours of sleep, much less the necessary 9 to 11 hours recommended by experts.

Traveling Smart

Many children get a ride to school from a parent or via carpool but a lot of children walk, ride their bikes or catch a bus. It's expected that children will be safe while getting to school but a little caution is always wise.

For the child that rides their bike, check the helmet for any fraying of the straps. How old is it? Does it have any scratches or dings? Does it need to be replaced? Remember that a damaged helmet may not protect your child when it's most crucial.

For the child that walks, even though we teach them to look both ways, remind them to be cautious. At the same time your child is rushing to school, many folks are rushing to work and they may be distracted. Studies have shown that nearly 1/3 of all children hit by a car are actually in a crosswalk. It is better to have your child arrive at school late than not at all. Encourage them to always wait to cross until all vehicles nearby have stopped, even if they have the right of way or a crossing guard is telling them to go.

Finally, for the child that rides the bus, they still have to walk to the bus stop so all of the above safety instructions for walking apply. Beyond that, does your child know to never step in front of the bus, no matter what? Bus drivers can't see what is right in front of the bus and must not be expected to know a child is there.

Quiz Your Kids

According to the World Health Organization over 2,000 children die every day from preventable accidents

and every year tens of millions are taken to hospital emergency rooms with injuries that can easily be prevented with a little caution.

Do your children know common safety precautions? Ask your children the following five questions about staying safe this school year. If they don't know the answer to one or more of them then take a few minutes and go over it. Your child deserves a safe and healthy school year.

1. What is the best thing for you to drink when you're thirsty? Water
2. When is it safe to enter a crosswalk? When all vehicles have stopped moving
3. When is it safe to walk in front of a school bus? Never
4. When do you have to wear a helmet when riding your bike? Always
5. What is the best way to carry my backpack? With both straps over both shoulders

A few extra minutes today can mean the difference in having a safe and healthy school year. Spending some time going over these concerns with your children may make a world of difference. Remember that you're also reminding them how much they mean to you and that you care about them, their safety and their happiness. Children need to be encouraged to talk to you; a child being bullied or picked on at school will more readily bring that concern to a parent that has shown them that they care about every area of their lives.

Chiropractic Factor

Your Family Wellness Chiropractor cares about every area of your family's health. If you have any questions about healthy school lunches, how to stay hydrated, how to get a good night's rest for you or your children, or how to make sure your child gets to school safely, be sure to address these concerns at your next adjustment. Your family's overall health and wellness is always of utmost concern.



*Dear Patient,
Dr. John is dedicated to providing you with the absolute best in family wellness care. So take a moment today to discuss with your Family Wellness Chiropractor any concerns you may have regarding your family's overall health and wellness.*

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