

# WHAT WE'RE READING...



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## 5 Healthy Back-to-School Tips



With summer coming to a close, next week is back to school for most kids. It is also a great opportunity to create new healthy habits for your kids and for the entire family. As a nutritionist counseling families and children, here are some simple tips to get you and your family off to a healthy start.

### 1. Eat a nutritious breakfast.

While there has been a debate recently about the merits of eating breakfast for weight loss, it is agreed that kids should not skip breakfast. Breakfast is a perfect opportunity to help your kids get a healthy dose of nutrients such as fiber, calcium, and protein. Great options include: whole grain cereal (with at least 3 grams of fiber) and low-fat or fat-free milk, low-fat Greek yogurt and fruit, or scrambled eggs and a slice whole wheat toast. And, whenever possible, try to eat breakfast as a family.

### 2. Limit liquid calories.

The easiest place to start is to limit sugary beverages such as soda. Sugary drinks are simply empty calories and devoid of nutrients. Try also limiting fruit juice or diluting juice such as OJ with water to reduce the sweetness and the calories. Try also helping your kids substitute sugar-sweetened drinks with a glass of fat-free milk.

### 3. Increase fruit and vegetable consumption.

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### 3. Increase fruit and vegetable consumption.

Fruits and veggies are rich in nutrients including antioxidant vitamins A and C, folate, fiber, and potassium. They are also low in calories. To help your kid increase their consumption of fruit and veggies, I suggest keeping pre-washed produce available for your kids to simply grab and eat. Keep washed berries, apples, pears, and bananas on hand.

Keep a bag of baby carrots and celery sticks around for kids to snack on.

#### **4. Plan dinner as a family.**

The best way to get your kids to eat healthy dinner is to engage them in the planning. Choose healthy options that everyone likes and let your kids select a veggie option and healthy whole grain option. Steamed broccoli, sautéed spinach, whole wheat pasta, and brown rice are some examples of healthy side dishes. Healthy main dish protein options include baked chicken or grilled fish. Try to make meals kid friendly and try to eat together as a family on most nights.

#### **5. Practice portion control.**

Finally, my favorite tip for families is to practice portion control. Minding your portions as well as those of your kids is, by far, one of the easiest ways to manage calories and avoid weight gain. I also love practicing portion control with kids as it allows for occasional treats instead of banning foods altogether. Portion out an occasional cookie for your kids' snack and add additional healthy choices such as melon, berries or grapes.

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