

Food for Thought:

Preparing our Children for Success or Sluggishness?

By: Dr. Brandon Crouch

Summer has come and gone and now is the time to send our little ones off to school. There are a lot of decisions to be made. What time do we need to get up to catch the bus? What clothes do we wear today? Did we get all our assignments completed? Of all the questions that need to be addressed the most important one is for you, the parent. **“What is my child going to be eating?”**

It is no secret that breakfast is the most important part of your child’s day (and yours too for that matter). Just think about it. Your child has just slept for 8-9 hours without any food or drink. To send them off to school without breakfast hoping that their blood sugar levels and brain activity function at a good level is wishful thinking. A good breakfast for your child can make the difference between them being energetic, alert and attentive or slow and sluggish.

So the first hurdle is making sure your child eats before school. Some experts suggest that children will eat breakfast on a more regular basis if a parent eats breakfast with them. Additionally setting rules of when to be awake and at the table ensures that breakfast is eaten every day.

Eating breakfast every morning also sets good eating habits in motion for them as they get older. One of the primary causes of adults having slower metabolisms and gaining weight is because they fail to eat within 1 hour of waking up. This has created an obesity epidemic. Studies show that 1 in 3 children are now overweight. This will lead to obesity, along with increased risk of asthma, heart disease, and cancer.

What you feed your children is just as important as getting them to eat. The best breakfast would be a low fat balance of fiber, protein and complex carbohydrates. This combination will keep your child feeling fuller, longer and provides the best health benefits. Although it saves time to offer up a quick pop tart or bowl of cereal for breakfast do take caution on what you feed them.

According to a Yale University study, breakfast cereals marketed to children contain 85% more sugar, 65% less fiber, and 60% more sodium than those targeted to adults. Cereal makers spend approximately \$150 million each year with their child targeted advertisements. If you choose cereal as the food of choice be sure not compromise good nutrients for that “sugar-filled” taste most kids love. Some good options to consider are oatmeal, whole grain toast, eggs, yogurt, granola, fruit, and vegetables.

Although breakfast time is crucial be mindful of your child’s time at school. Have discussions and set rules about avoiding high calorie, high sugar, low nutrient filled

vending machines. Most children who utilize vending machines will create a daily habit. Talk with them and pack them a more appropriate snack which will save you money and give them more nutrients and minerals. Packing them a bottle of water and fruit for snacks will ensure they will resist the big snack box in the corner that trades dollar bills for sugar and calories.

Lastly, get involved with your child's lunchtime routine. Although some of my favorite people on this earth are the school lunchroom staff not every meal on the menu is healthy and nutritious. If your child is going to buy lunch go over the lunch menu with them at home and talk about the options together. Discuss with your child why one choice might be better than another. If you do pack lunches for your child refrain from the processed "lunch in a box" pre-packaged foods. Most of these are full of preservatives and empty calories.

Besides making sure your child gets his or her home work completed one of your greatest contributions to your child's day can be making sure they eat good nutritious meals every day starting with breakfast. Getting in a routine and planning out their meals a week at a time will make those fast paced mornings easier to manage. Remember your child's food is their fuel for the day. Start them off each day with good nutrients and watch them excel to greatness!

About the Author:

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