

Getting Your Kids

When it comes to your kids, it should not be just about your kids being smart in school work. It is also about them making smart eating choices!

To Eat Right at School





mart eating is all about eating right in order to lead a healthy lifestyle. It is also easier to do than most people think – even kids can do it with the right advice and support from their parents!

Now that the kids are off to school, parents should ensure that their children continue to eat healthily. You may be wondering, "My kids are in school! How can I watch over what they are eating?" Well, here are some tips to help parents like you get started.

Make time for breakfast

Breakfast recharges your children, restoring their energy and vital nutrients after a night of sleep. This means better learning and improved school performance. There are also less chances of them overeating during recess.

- Prepare meals in advance using simple ingredients that can be refrigerated and reheated (if necessary), i.e. sandwiches.
- Stock up some healthy breakfast food choices such as a cup of yogurt or a small packet of milk, for a "grab and go" breakfast when your child is in a hurry.
- Cook in bulk during weekends and pre-pack them for easy preparation and consumption throughout the week. It takes only a short while to reheat the food in the morning.
- If your children have problems waking up in time to catch their transportation to school, pack their breakfast in a container for them to eat while on the way to school or before the school starts.

Help them get the most out of lunch

One of the challenges in shaping healthy eating habits among your children can be the type of foods being sold at the school canteen. Depending on the canteen, sometimes the foods sold may be high in fat and sugar content, for example fried foods and sweetened beverages. Soft drinks and sugary foods may also present an irresistible temptation to your children. You can help steer your children in the right direction via the following ways:

- Prepare and pack healthy snacks for children to bring to school instead of buying food at the school canteen.
- Teach them about healthy food choices so that they can select healthier options when buying canteen foods and choose the less healthy ones as an occasional treat. Some examples:
 - Cut down on buying deep-fried or oily foods as much as possible

 instead of kari laksa, for example, go for meehoon sup.
 - Drink more plain water, and save sugary beverages for special moments.

Help them manage peer pressure

Ultimately, your children may end up eating unhealthily not because they want to, but because all their school friends are eating such food. Here are some tips to help your children make healthy eating choices while still fitting in well with their friends. If you practise these tips early, your children may also find it easier to say 'no' to smoking and other unhealthy habits when they are older.

- Always be open and communicative with your children. This way, they will be more willing to talk to you when their friends are asking them to do things that they are not comfortable with.
- Teach your children to say 'no' without feeling like the odd duck out. Instead of just saying 'no', have your child explain why he or she feels that way. It can be anything

from a simple "I don't like the taste!" to "Too much soft drink can make me fat."

- Help build up your children's self-esteem, to give them the confidence to say no to things they are uncomfortable with.
 - ★ Be supportive and encouraging. You can kill 2 birds with 1 stone by leaving feel-good notes inside your children's lunch boxes – it makes them feel better and gets them more interested in eating what you have prepared for them!
 - ★ Let your children understand that it is normal to be a little different from everyone else. Therefore, it is perfectly fine to do things differently (for example, eating food from home during recess instead of buying canteen food). Help them understand that true friends will accept these differences and still love them for who they are.
 - Lead by example, and be a positive role model to your children. If they view you as confident, supportive and positive, they will most likely adopt the same attitude when it comes to food as well as life. **HT**

