

Kids, Nutrition, and Physical Activity



What Teachers Should Know

Children get many benefits from participating in regular physical activity, eating healthfully, and limiting screen time. These benefits extend beyond physical health and into classroom performance.

The benefits of healthy eating and physical activity include:

- Promoting normal physical growth and development
- Preventing childhood health problems like obesity, dental cavities, iron deficiency anemia, and even diabetes
- Providing nutrients important for brain development, immunity, healthy skin and eyes, and other body functions
- Lowering the risk of future chronic diseases such as heart disease, high blood pressure, adult-onset diabetes, osteoporosis, and some cancers

Healthy eating and physical activity help your students' learning by:

- Providing nutrients needed for brain development
- Stimulating the brain cells to make connections and grow
- Stimulating motor development necessary for reading and spelling
- Stimulating hand–eye coordination for reading and writing
- Increasing alertness and decreasing absenteeism and tardiness
- Improving self-confidence

The harmful effects of watching more than 2 hours of TV include:

- Increased likelihood of overweight
- Opportunities for unhealthy snacking, specifically soda and other foods low in nutritional value
- Exposure to advertising for fast food, sugared breakfast cereals, and snacks
- Time away from being physically active and other more beneficial activities

When you communicate with your students about the importance of being physically active and eating right, do it their way. Approach this message using concepts they can relate to by letting them know that:

- Being active and healthy is fun
- It can help build strong hearts, bones, muscles, and joints
- An active life can brighten your mood and build a positive self-image
- The right foods and lots of activity can help you maintain a healthy weight
- The brain needs activity and healthy foods to help it develop and improve your ability to learn

For more information on children's health, please review the attached article outlining the results of recent research.

