



Brain Power

Parent - Family Newsletter



April 2011

What Their Bodies Need to Succeed

How to improve your child's academic achievement through healthy habits

As the school year winds down, the end-of-year testing season gears up. Your child has studied hard all year long to ace the exam, but if he or she can't concentrate, studying might not make much difference. Not being able to concentrate in school is a common issue facing students, and the most likely culprit is a combination of poor nutrition and a lack of physical activity. That's right; not only can good nutrition and regular exercise keep health problems like childhood obesity at bay, they can also help improve students' performance at school.

- Drinking a can, bottle or glass of soda at least once a week.

"Exercise activates the brain. With exercise, your heart rate increases, and oxygen and blood flow to the brain increase," says Sarah Lee, a health scientist at the CDC.

As for the link between good nutrition and academic performance, Lee's colleague, Caitlin Merlo, says research on eating breakfast offers the strongest evidence. "Most of the research has found that kids who eat breakfast had increased attendance rates, improved mood and improved academic performance," Merlo says

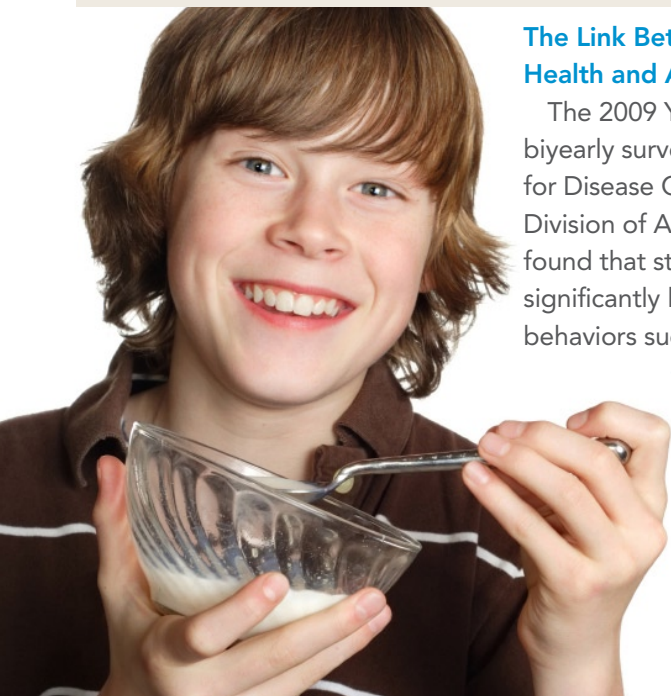
Despite this, Merlo says approximately 23 percent of children and 32 percent of adolescents skip the most important meal of the day.

So what can you do to help make sure your child achieves optimal brain power? Check out our tips on the next page and start implementing them today.

The Link Between Health and Academics

The 2009 Youth Risk Behavior Survey, a biyearly survey conducted by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's Division of Adolescent and School Health, found that students with higher grades are significantly less likely to have engaged in behaviors such as:

- Being physically active at least 60 minutes per day fewer than five days per week. (Current guidelines recommend daily activity.)
- Watching television three or more hours per day.
- Using computers three or more hours per day.





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Spring Outside For Exercise

Now that the weather is warming up, take your family activities outside. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention recommends that children and adolescents do 60 minutes or more of physical activity every day. Most of that time should be reserved for aerobic activity, such as brisk walking or running, while muscle and bone strengthening activities should be incorporated at least three days a week. Here are some outside activity ideas to get you started:

- Walking the neighborhood
- Running relays
- Swimming laps
- Pulling weeds
- Throwing a Frisbee
- Shooting hoops
- Playing catch
- Going for a hike
- Skateboarding or riding a kick scooter
- Jumping rope
- Hula-hooping



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7 Breakfast Ideas Your Kids Will Love

Quick, healthy and delicious -- these are all words to describe the following breakfast ideas. There's one for every day of the week!

✓ Monday:

Peanut Butter and Banana Wrap

Wrap 1 sliced banana and 2 tbsp peanut butter in a whole-grain tortilla. Serve with glass of skim milk.

microwave, if you're really pressed for time) and place it and a slice of low-fat cheese on a toasted whole-grain English muffin. Serve with 8 oz. of orange juice or skim milk.

and fresh fruits, nuts, fruit preserves, maple syrup or brown sugar.

✓ Tuesday:

Bowl of Cereal and Fruit

Pour 1 serving of your child's favorite fortified cereal (look for whole-grain varieties and fewer than 8 grams of sugar per serving) plus 1 cup skim milk in a bowl. Serve with 1 piece of their favorite fruit.

✓ Thursday:

Yogurt Parfait

Combine 1 cup plain yogurt plus 1 cup assorted fruit with 1/4 cup granola.

✓ Saturday:

Strawberry-Banana Smoothie

Combine 1 cup fat-free yogurt or skim milk with 1/2 cup fresh or frozen strawberries and one sliced banana. Add a tablespoon of ground flax seed for an added nutritional punch.

✓ Wednesday:

Egg Sandwich

Cook 1 egg (in the

✓ Friday:

Do-It-Yourself Oatmeal

You cook the oats; let the kids do the rest. Cook instant oats with skim milk and let kids choose their own toppings, including dried

✓ Sunday:

Scrambled Eggs and Ham

Scramble 2 eggs and warm 2 slices of lean deli ham. Serve with 1 slice whole-wheat toast and a cup of skim milk.