

Fighting Childhood Obesity with Healthy Lunches



According to a 2005 report published by the Institute of Medicine, “Over the past three decades, the rate of childhood obesity has more than doubled for preschool children aged 2 to 5 years and adolescents aged 12 to 19 years, and it has more than tripled for children aged 6-11 years. Approximately nine million children over 6 years of age are considered obese. “ Even more astounding is that the rate of type II diabetes, heart disease and high cholesterol continues to sore in children.

You can help make a difference in preventing this vastly growing epidemic one meal at a time by educating and making healthy meal choices part of your family’s lifestyle.

This school year make every effort to eat foods for lunch that your body and brain can use for fuel instead of just for storing fat.

Some healthy suggestions include:

1. Start with what you drink. Water is the perfect choice and can be packed with your lunch in a stainless-steel thermos with ice cubes. If you need some flavor add a slice of lemon.
2. Substitute the traditional sandwich bread with a whole-grain tortilla wrap. Not only are wraps a healthier choice, they can be “stuffed” with vegetables like cucumbers, dark greens like broccoli and spinach, sprouts, tomatoes and peppers.
3. Increase the veggies. Try to make this part of your lunch the largest by replacing chips and cookies with fresh veggies and low fat dips.
4. Avoid processed foods like fruit cups. Fresh fruit has a lot more nutritional value and is not sitting in high fructose corn syrup which contributes to obesity.
5. Add variety, creativity and color to your lunch. It’s important that children like their school lunches otherwise they won’t eat them. Try to add something new each week.
6. Create a menu every Sunday both parents and students together. This will help avoid last minute poor choices.
7. Remember, it is the student’s parent or guardians’ responsibility (not their school cafeteria) to provide them with the right foods they need to grow and lead healthy productive lives.