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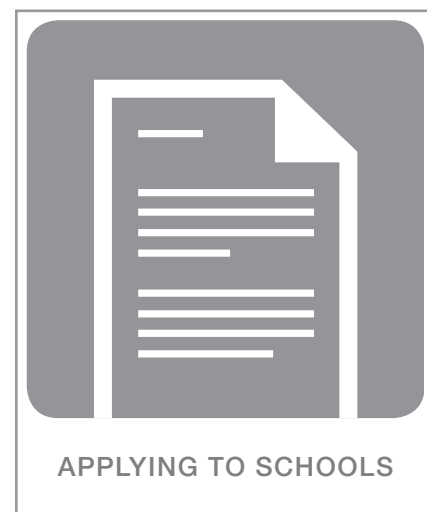
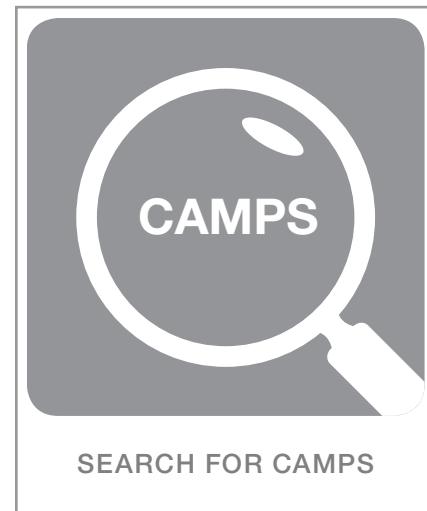
**NUTRITION TIPS
TO HELP YOUR KIDS
THRIVE IN SCHOOL**



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Cover photograph by Christinne Muschi

NUTRITION AND ACADEMIC SUCCESS

1



Appleby College – Photograph by Mike Pochwat

Michelle Eisen

Children require healthy food to concentrate, to develop and maintain self-regulation, to have full function of their short and long-term memory, and to ensure proper cognitive and behavioural functioning necessary for academic achievement.

Consuming refined sugar allows for a short spike in alertness, followed by a drop in energy and concentration. Providing your children with balanced and healthy meals will allow them to stay focused and alert in school throughout the day. Many parents express challenges in providing healthy meals for their children from lacking cooking skills, to their child **refusing to eat vegetables**. Luckily, there are quick and easy solutions to many of the challenges you may be facing in your quest to providing healthy options for your child.

FIVE EASY WAYS TO BREAK DOWN THE ROADBLOCKS TO HEALTHY EATING:

1. Involve the kids—Children love to learn. What better life lesson to teach than how to shop and cook with health in mind? As you make your way through the produce aisles, ask your child what fruits and vegetables look interesting to him. The vibrant colours of a dragon fruit, or the interesting shapes of a squash may excite him. Don't be afraid to purchase new types of foods. By bringing home and eating the produce that spikes your child's interest, you are promoting his excitement about eating fresh and healthy food! Even better, have your child help prepare the foods that he has chosen. There are many great websites such as The [World's Healthiest Foods](#), devoted to providing easy-to-follow recipes for each type of fruit and vegetable. Cooking is a great way to increase your child's self-efficacy in [working with different foods in the kitchen](#)—increasing the likelihood that he will cook healthy meals for himself later on in life.

2. It's all about the presentation—Believe it or not, we begin eating with our eyes at a very young age. When we think about children's favourite candies, they are often bright, vibrant colours. A neatly presented, colourful plate of food will entice your youngster to dig in!



3. Hide the vegetables—Through my research, I have found that the older the child, the more stubborn he becomes towards changing his eating habits—this stubbornness brings us right into adulthood. How did I get a group of 16-20 year olds to try new vegetables? I hid them. Purchasing a good-quality juicer is a great investment (that will cost between \$100—\$180). Juicing allows for easy consumption of micronutrients; and when paired with flavourful fruits, the presence of vegetables can be masked. Pairing vegetables with the right fruits can conceal brussels sprouts, broccoli and cauliflower.

Relating eating healthy to feeling great through personal experience will provide them with a hunger for nutritious food.

4. You can't eat what's not there—When children are hungry, most opt for the snacks rich in salt, processed flour, and sugar, such as chips, chocolate, donuts, cookies with icing, etc. By keeping these types of foods out of the home, you have installed a foolproof, prevention plan. Without these foods in the house, parents do not have to feel guilty for caving in to their child's sugary wants, and children will feel more compelled to reach for a fruit or vegetable for a day-time snack.

Did you know? It is actually possible to train your child's taste buds. As in **sports** or learning to play an instrument, it is much easier to train at a young age. Children as well as adults learn to crave the foods they are used to eating, which is why it is so difficult for a child used to a diet low in vegetables, to become accustomed to eating vegetables on a daily basis. With persistence, however, taste buds can be retrained. Allowing children the opportunity to relate eating healthy to feeling great through personal experience will provide them with a hunger for nutritious food.

5. Read the label—When deciding on which juice, granola bar, cereal, or any other pre-packaged food to buy, it is important to read the label. Ingredients are listed from most to least abundant. If you are finding any form of sugar within the first three listed ingredients, there is a much healthier option out there—keep looking. There are a few other tips for reading labels parents should keep in mind. Keep an eye on sodium levels. Depending on their ages, children should not consume more than 1200 mg of sodium per day. Avoid foods with artificial sweeteners, including sucralose and aspartame, as studies have shown that they may not be safe for **brain-development in children.**

As schools play a crucial role in the development of your child, encourage your school to provide nutrition workshops for their students, as **Appleby College's** nutritionist, Norine Khalil, provided for hers.

Just as you teach your child to be polite, and responsible, teach your child to love healthy foods and all of the benefits that go with it. Together, you can enjoy learning and feeling your best.



THE BEST FOODS TO FUEL SUCCESS AT SCHOOL

2



Canadian Independent College - Photograph by Andrew Tolson

- *IronKids*

Proper nutrition can make the difference between a good school year and a great school year. Pack lunches with a punch, prepare dinners that deliver and start their day with breakfast fit for a champion! The foods we offer can help kids succeed in the classroom.

BRAIN BOOSTING BREAKFAST

Include berries such as strawberries, raspberries and blueberries in the most important meal of the day. Rich in vitamins and antioxidants, they ward off damage caused by free radicals and may improve the cognitive function of the brain. Add in steel cut oats for protein, or omega 3 eggs for a breakfast that will leave them feeling full and hungry for learning..

SMART SNACKS

Include calcium, protein and Vitamin D rich milk, yogurt and cheese for snacks as part of a balanced day. Calcium keeps bones & teeth strong while Vitamin D boosts their immune system to keep them healthy and in the classroom. Water is also an important snack that is often over looked. Staying hydrated, especially if your **kids are active**, is an important part of a smart & healthy diet.

LEARNING INSPIRED LUNCH

Start with whole grain bread that is rich in fibre and B Vitamins, then top with protein and omega 3's to inspire healthy learning. B Vitamins, including folate and B12 are used to make memory cells in the brain and regulate energy levels to keep kids alert in the classroom. Fibre is important to keep kids regular; constipation can leave kids feeling sluggish and distracted. Add tuna, eggs, avocado, or nut butter to their sandwiches for a satisfying lunch worthy of an A+.

SUCCESSFUL SUPPERS

Use family dinners as an opportunity to offer new foods and discuss healthy eating habits. Have the kids help you decide on the vegetable and protein you will have, then talk about the vitamins in different foods and explain why they are important. Your brain is comprised of approximately 60% fat, and by including Omega 3 fatty fish such as salmon and tuna at dinner you are providing the essential fats your brain requires for optimal functioning.

Following these simple tips will ensure your child has a nutrient dense, fibre rich diet that maintains consistent blood sugar levels and helps them stay focused by avoiding the highs and lows from sugary processed foods. If you have picky eaters in your bunch, taking vitamins to supplement their diet ensures they are still getting essential nutrients. Incorporate antioxidant rich berries, brain boosting omega 3 eggs, satisfying protein, fibre and vitamin B rich grains and rehydrating water to provide your young scholars with a great school year.



SPRING BREAK RECIPES

3

Canadian Independent College - Photograph by Andrew Tolson

- *Agnes Stawicki*

Spring break is a good opportunity to do family activities, so why not transform mealtime and involve your kids in the process of cooking and creating healthy snacks?

Children love to watch adults cook and are naturally curious; give them responsibilities and let them do some stirring, baking and decorating! They will develop their self-esteem and cooking skills, and the daily chore of cooking will be a fun and rewarding activity for all.

SPRING BREAK RECIPES

If you're looking for something new and original to cook with your little Cheese Lovers during Spring break, the Berry, Mascarpone and Oat Crisp Salad is a quick, nutritious and easily prepared dish that is sure to please. Diggers and scoopers will enjoy its special feature: its incredible edible cantaloupe bowl! (Pssst, this means more fun for them and fewer dishes for you!)

During March break or spring break, while your children are busy with activities and camps, giving them cheese is a great way to fill their nutritional needs and provide them with the necessary energy to get through the day. Cheese snacks can be handed out in most situations and are easy to carry. Luckily for busy parents who are out all day, cheese allows for a wide range of easy quick-fix recipes at suppertime.

TIPS TO GET YOUR CHILD TO EAT LOCAL VEGGIES

4



Canadian Independent College - Photograph by Andrew Tolson

- *Sonia Satov*

Eating locally is one of the many dimensions of popular food politics, entering into debates ranging from economics to nutrition. However, choosing local produce often involves a much bigger hurdle than finding out where that yellow zucchini was grown.

While it is much easier to get a child to eat a juicy fresh tomato or a sweet orange, colder Canadian temperatures mean that for most of the year our produce scene is dominated by veggies that are often on kids' hit lists. So, how do you get your kids to eat those tubers and leafy greens? From my kitchen to yours, here are some tips, techniques, and kid-friendly recipes that just might make kale a fan favourite.

LOCAL VEGGIES GET A MAKEOVER

From cheese to peanut butter, sometimes it's all in the preparation. Here are a few ways to make the common culprits tasty for young taste buds.

Cauliflower: Try It “Mashed”

These aren't exactly like mashed potatoes, but are far more similar than you would ever suspect from a cauliflower. Break a head of cauliflower into pieces and boil it until soft. Then blend it all (in a hand blender or food processor) until very smooth. Season with salt, pepper, and a bit of something creamy like butter, almond milk, or cream cheese.



Kale: Go For Chips

Kale chip recipes are all over the internet, but I was definitely skeptical. Chips and green leafy vegetables just don't seem like a natural fit. However, if you haven't tried them, I guarantee that Kale chips will taste nothing like you expect. They are expensive to buy, but super simple to make. While salted and oiled is easiest, I suggest trying [this recipe](#) for a non-dairy but surprisingly “cheesy” version.



Broccoli: Peanut Butter Makes It Better

A simple peanut sauce turns broccoli (or green beans, snow peas and many other vegetables for that matter) into a kid-friendly dish. Store bought peanut sauce is often spicy so try a [simple version like this one](#).



Parsnips: The Next Sweet Potato Fries

Ok, I don't really see these appearing at your local restaurant anytime soon, but I do recommend trying them out at home. Bake them just like you would traditional fries and they will caramelize slightly for a slightly sweeter version.



Zucchini: A Bar-Less Snack Food

Zucchini is a great candidate for the breaded and baked category of foods (think chicken fingers) and become a healthy option that is fun to serve with your favourite dipping sauce. This [standard recipe](#) can be easily made gluten-free by using your favourite gluten-free flour and cornmeal instead of the breadcrumbs.



TIPS AND TECHNIQUES

Beyond the specific examples above, there are some ways to approach preparing veggies in general that help with picky eaters. Many of them tried and true, these ideas can help with vegetables ranging from the humble carrot to the “frightening” beet.

Blend It

Blending removes texture, “odd” appearances and sometimes smells. This is great for a big pot of soup or pasta sauce. For soup, try making a pot of soup with a mix of root vegetables like carrots and rutabaga — just be sure to moderate the amount of strong flavours. If you include potatoes, it will be nice and creamy when blended. For pasta sauce, try adding red peppers or carrots to the usual tomatoes. Blended up your kids likely won’t even notice (and it adds a bit of sweetness).



Hide It

Blending is the obvious way to hide veggies, but there are several veggies that are easy to “miss” when paired with the right ingredients. For example, beets are surprisingly unnoticeable in [brownies like these ones.](#)



Dip It

Raw veggies are much more fun with a dip, like hummus, salsa and cream cheese or yogurt-based dips. Consider adding veggies and dip to your child’s lunch box. If you’re the crafty type, [this article](#) on building a bento-box lunch may provide inspiration for adding a bit of flare with some design tips. Keep in mind: If given the option, some kids will consume more dip than veggies, defeating the nutritional value.



It's amazing to see how involvement breeds interest, responsibility, and even pride.

Play With It

Veggies are easy to cut into fun shapes, and can be stuck together with cream cheese or peanut butter. For example, cutting carrots and celery crosswise produces circles and crescent moons. Sweet peppers can be many things from smiles (thin strips) to sails (thick strips). The list goes on, and the internet may be your best source of inspiration. As long as the precedent of eating what you create exists, playing with your food might just be a good thing.



Get Your Kids Involved

Not a technique per se, but possibly the most powerful tip here as it helps build lifelong healthy eating habits. Using fun gadgets like a juicer or the shredding option of a food processor can be a great way to engage them. I was blown away at how an apple corer turned my class of **10-year-old boys** into eager chefs. Gadgets and gizmos aside, at home kids can become part of the grocery shopping, recipe selection and/or even cooking dinner. It's amazing to see how involvement breeds interest, responsibility, and even pride.



5 WAYS TO ENCOURAGE CHILDREN TO EAT HEALTHY

5



Canadian Independent College - Photograph by Andrew Tolson

- Lisa Shoreland

Having just returned from a weekend with my in-laws, nutrition is at the forefront of my mind. I love my mother-in-law, but sometimes her idea of providing kid-friendly meals for my son is stocking her freezer and pantry with microwave pizza, boxed macaroni and cheese, frozen chicken nuggets, hot dogs, and sugary fruit drinks. Sure, those might be toddler dietary staples in some households, but not in mine. I try my very best to explain to her that our son eats what we eat. We expose him to a wide variety of foods to ensure he has a **balanced, healthy diet**. I have made a very concerted effort from the time he began eating solids, to offer a wide array of foods. If he goes through phases of food rejection, so be it, but I didn't want to be responsible for him having a picky palette.

It is absolutely essential that children start off on the right foot when it comes to nutrition and food choices. If you are also the parent of a young child, you probably understand that finding foods they will eat can sometimes be an unbelievable challenge. Even more difficult can be coercing them to actually eat.

Nutrition Month is a great check point to evaluate your family's eating habits. Here are five ways to encourage children to eat healthy all year long:

Children are easily influenced by the presentation of a meal. If it appears fun, they will often give it a try.

1. Incorporate Color. A plate full of color is visually appealing to a small child. By choosing foods that are rich in a spectrum of colors, you are offering your child a meal that is rich in vitamins, minerals and antioxidants.

2. Presentation. A regular banana might seem boring to a toddler, but a banana cut into several slices and topped with blueberries may seem much more interesting and worth eating. Or take melon, for example. Instead of handing a child a slice of watermelon or cantaloupe, use a melon scoop and serve each ball on a toothpick. Children are easily influenced by the presentation of a meal. If it appears fun, they will often give it a try.

3. Let Them Be Heard. Children will typically be more open to eating foods if they are given the opportunity to choose it. Next time you are in the grocery store and you have your toddler in tow allow him/her to choose which fruits and vegetables he/she would like to have for snacks and meals during the upcoming week.

4. Smart Snacking. It's easy to buy things like fruit snacks and chips. However, it's worth taking the time to purchase and prepare healthier snacks such as apple slices, carrot sticks and even "ants on a log" (celery sticks filled with peanut butter and topped with raisins). In fact, if you let your child help put their own ants on the log, they will enjoy being involved and are more likely to indulge in their snack.

5. Smooth Operator. If you have a hard time getting your child to eat fruits and vegetables, try sneaking them into a smoothie for breakfast or snack. Frozen fruit, yogurt, banana, honey and ice are all you need to whip up a delicious, vitamin-packed, frosty treat. Experiment with ingredients even try incorporating foods such as spinach, so your child will reap the nutritional benefits without even really knowing what they ate.

MUST TRY RECIPES

[Effective vegetable-concealing recipes.](#)

[5 Recipes for Healthy, Hot Lunches](#)

[Banana Cream Cheese Smore](#)

[Pizza Muffins](#)

[Tandoori Chicken Burgers](#)

RELATED RESOURCES:

[10 Ways to Get Kids to Want to Eat Vegetables](#)

[The World's Healthiest Foods](#)

[Food Revolution: Connecting Kids with Food](#)

[Students Celebrate Nutrition Month with Local, Organic Foods](#)



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