

## Health and Wellness Newsletter for Early Childhood Educators

# Healthy Eating, Active Bodies, Healthy Minds

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## Why Having Breakfast Is Smart

Breakfast is the most important meal of the day. Breakfast provides children with the energy they need to start their day, as well as providing the right vitamins and minerals to help with growth and development. Studies show that breakfast improves behavior, reduces trips to the nurse's office and improves test scores. To have the greatest benefits of breakfast, children should not only take the time to eat breakfast, but also make healthy food choices. Breakfast should provide about one-fourth of your daily recommended intake of calories, vitamins, and minerals (USDA, 2008). For children, this means about 300–600 calories should be consumed at breakfast (Mayo Clinic, 2012).



Photo: Network for a Healthy California

Network for a Healthy California

### DON'T SKIP BREAKFAST

Many children do not have breakfast on a regular basis. Children are left to feed themselves and often their breakfast has poor nutritional value or is skipped entirely. Some children who skip breakfast may have not have eaten the night before. These children may go hungry until lunchtime, or sometimes they snack on foods that are not nutritious because of hunger pangs. It's important to get children in the habit of eating breakfast at an early age. The results of national surveys have shown that many children stop eating breakfast as they get older (International Food Information Council Foundation, 2013). Children and adolescents may not enjoy typical breakfast foods so they just skip the meal. Many feel like they don't have the time or they're not hungry first thing in the morning. Another common reason for skipping breakfast is that they would rather sleep a little longer instead of eating breakfast.

### SCHOOL BREAKFAST

School breakfast may be an alternative to serving breakfast at home. Some children may be eligible for free or reduced price breakfast. This is of particular importance for children who often do not eat in the evening. Teachers can help increase

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the participation of children in the school breakfast program. Breakfast is the most important meal of the day because it provides essential nutrients and calories needed to start children's day in the right direction.

#### Sources:

California Food Policy Advocates, <http://cfpa.net/breakfast-first-campaign>  
University of Florida IFAS Extension. Raising Healthy Children: Begin With Breakfast, Rebecca A. Clinton and Karla P. Shelnett, <http://edis.ifas.ufl.edu/fy1153>



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## Teacher's Corner

# Creating Opportunities

Children who eat a healthy breakfast tend to have better concentration and are more prepared to learn (Nicklas, O'Neil, & Myers, 2004). Breakfast consumption improves cognitive performance, school attendance, psychosocial function and mood. It is important to get children in the habit of eating breakfast at an early age. Teachers can support school breakfast and use this opportunity to reinforce educational concepts associated with early development.



### Domain: Physical Development (PD) and Health (HLTH)

#### THINKING OUTSIDE THE BOX

**ACTIVITY.** Get children moving by pretending to make a breakfast salad. Ahead of time, gather pictures of some fruits available in the cafeteria. Start the activity by getting children into a circle and pretend the circle is a bowl.

**TAKING ACTION.** Give each child a picture of a fruit. It is okay if some children get the same fruit. Teacher calls out one of the fruits and says an action. For example: I am going to make a fruit salad for breakfast. We

are all going to share. I am going to have \_\_\_\_\_ (name of the fruit) that is \_\_\_\_\_ (action like jumping or clapping etc.). All of the children with the picture you called will go to the center of the circle and do the action. Play continues with more fruits and actions being called out to go to the center of the bowl to make the salad.

#### Action Verbs to use with Breakfast Salad

- Twirling
- Jumping
- Running
- Hopping
- Waving
- Flying
- Dancing
- Clapping
- Kicking
- Rolling their arms
- Walking on tip-toe
- Splashing



### Domain: Language and Literacy Development (LLD) and English Language Development (ELD)

"One of the best predictors of whether a child will function competently in school and go on to contribute actively in our increasingly literate society is the level to which the child progresses in reading and writing." (IRA/NAEYC, 1998, p. 30)

**GRAB AND GO ACTIVITY.** Check with your School Nutrition Services Department if it is available at your site. Some schools provide Grab and Go style breakfasts. Grab and Go breakfasts are packaged in paper bags, boxes or trays. A simple Grab and Go option is packing fresh fruits to eat when there is little time to enjoy a sit-down meal. Bananas, apples, and grapes are all great examples of fruits that can be transported easily.

**TAKING ACTION.** Ask children to tell you what is inside their Grab and Go bags. Teacher prints the name of each of the items. Print and sound out each letter. Go over each word when you are done. Explain to the children you will assign a color dot to each food item. Tell them the colors: blue (dairy), purple (protein), brown (grains, e.g. cereals), red (fruits), and green (vegetables). Ask them to tell you what color dot you should assign to each item.

Optional: Give each child a chart you have created with a column for food items (vertical) and across the top row the names of each day of the week. Ask children to copy the words from the list you printed. Distribute sticky dots (colors listed above) to each child. Each day, children place a dot next to the items they ate. At the end of the week they can add up the number of times they ate each item.

#### More on Grab and Go Breakfast

Grab and Go breakfasts can be served first thing in the morning, between classes, at a mid-morning break or delivered to individual classrooms. Students can pick up their Grab and Go breakfast from the cafeteria or from carts located in the hallway, school entrance, or other high traffic areas. Students can take the breakfast and eat it in the cafeteria, outside, in the hall, or take it to their classroom to eat there, based on what the school decides is appropriate. This method of serving breakfast has a lot of flexibility.

#### Source:

University of Wisconsin Cooperative Extension and Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction  
<http://fyi.uwex.edu/wischoolbreakfast/publications-research>



## BUILDING A GARDEN CONNECTION: Eating Roots

Children will be surprised to know we eat the roots of some plants. Roots grow into the ground from the base of the plant stem. Roots anchor the plant, absorb water and nutrients, and store energy. Most root vegetables provide an excellent source of vitamin C, and they are also a good source of fiber. Complex carbohydrates (commonly referred to as “starches”) are key nutrients in root vegetables. Some root vegetables include: beet, carrot, cassava, jicama, parsnip, radish, rutabaga, turnip, sweet potato, potato and yucca. For information about how to plant and grow root vegetables, refer to Root Vegetables Botanical Images (in the Educator’s Corner) on [www.harvestofthemonth.com](http://www.harvestofthemonth.com) and University of California Garden Web <http://cagardenweb.ucdavis.edu>.



The Roots Song can help make the children aware of the roots of the plant. The children can squat with fingers spread like roots while singing:

The roots hold the plant in the ground.  
They gather up the water that falls around.  
And there’s a root inside of me,  
because a carrot is a root that I eat.  
So roots are a part, roots are a part  
that plants and people need.

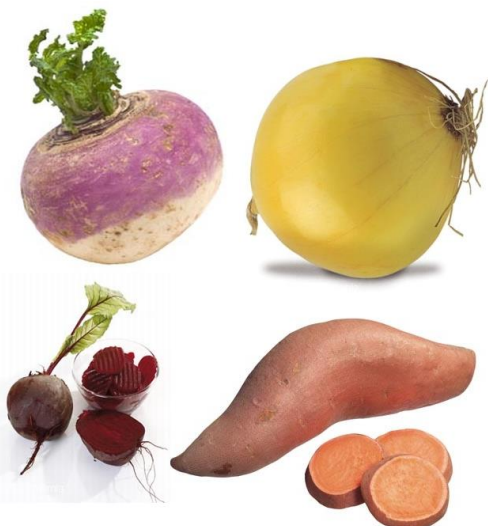


### Sources:

Adapted from:

*Roots, Stems, Leaves* by Banana Slug String Band.

<http://bananaslugs.bandcamp.com/track/roots-stems-leaves>



## Physical Activity Classroom Breaks

*When appropriate a teacher can find time to give children the opportunity to use their muscles. Short brain breaks are ideas that encourage children to use their imagination and creativity.*

### BRAIN BREAK:

- **Choo, Choo, Choo, Choo** (rub palms together in circular motion to make noise, slowly at first, gradually increasing speed)
- **Too-too, too-too, too-too** (keep hands rubbing fast and call too-too for whistle)
- **Choo-choo, Choo-choo, Choo-choo** (rub hands gradually more and more slowly)
- **Ding-dong, ding-dong, ding-dong** (stop altogether and call ding-dong)

### Source:

Brain-Break Activities-Ideas for short physical activity breaks  
Iowa State University, University Extension  
<http://pinterest.com/parko/brain-break-activities/>



## Educational Resources for Early Childhood Educators

The resources we included in this package are a compilation of resources we found useful while preparing the Tips for Busy Early Childhood Professionals and Health and Wellness Newsletter for Early Childhood Educators. In our selection we include books that will help ECE providers to increase children's awareness of the importance of breakfast and support the importance of eating fruits and vegetables.



Photo: Network for a Healthy California

### Selected Children's Literature on Health and Wellness

*Autumn is for Apples* by Michelle Knudson

*Bread, Bread, Bread* by Ann Morris

*Eating the Alphabet* by Lois Ehlert

*Corn is Maize: The Gift of the Indians* by Alike

*Fruit Salad* by Ellen Weiss

*Oliver Fruit Salad* by Vivian French

*Strawberries are Red* by Petr Horacek

*The Tortilla Factory* by Gary Paulsen

*Too Many Tamales* by Gary Soto

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