

# Eating, Sleeping, and Learning

Establishing healthy habits before school starts can ease the transition into a new school year.

You can help your family prepare for the school year by easing into new routines and promote healthy habits.

## Eating

**Breakfast:** Stock your kitchen with plenty of healthy breakfast foods, such as whole-grain breads and cereals, yogurt, milk, and fresh fruit or make sure your child eats a balanced breakfast at school.

**Lunch:** Look over the school menu with your child, especially if your child is a picky eater (many schools provide the menu on their website). If your child chooses to bring a lunch, plan to pack a healthy lunch your child will enjoy.

**After School:** Keep nutritious foods on hand so your child can prepare their own snacks. Celery with peanut butter (if your child does not have a peanut allergy), carrot sticks with dip, microwave popcorn, and cheese with whole-grain crackers are good snack options.

## Sleeping

Ease your family's transition to a "school night" sleep schedule by rolling back bedtimes the week before classes start. Kids ages 5 to 12 need 10 to 11 hours of sleep per night, while older children need at least 9 hours of sleep.

Your kids may not be getting enough sleep if they:

- Are irritable or restless or have a short attention span.
- Have much less energy than they normally do.
- Are more impatient, anxious, or defensive than usual.

You can help your children get sufficient sleep by establishing and maintaining a nighttime routine. The National Sleep Foundation recommends:

- Limiting caffeine consumption in the afternoon and evening.
- Avoiding serving big dinners close to bedtime.
- Setting a regular bedtime and enforcing it.
- Creating a calming nighttime routine. Video games and TV shows are too stimulating before bed. Instead, share a favorite story with your child or encourage her to read on her own.

## Learning

Much of a child's success in school is tied to the support he gets at home. You can help your kids get the most out of school by:

- Maintaining open lines of communication with teachers and understanding their expectations.
- Creating a homework station and keeping adequate school supplies on hand.
- Designating times for doing homework, playing outside, and watching TV or playing video games.
- Being available to help with homework.
- Observing your children for signs of frustration or confusion.

You'll most likely get the teacher's email address or phone number at the school open house. Don't be afraid to use it, and don't wait until the parent-teacher conference to address issues of concern. Taking steps early can make a big difference.

Source: *School Family*

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