

Children's HEALTH

Nutrition For Healthy Kids: Pack A Lunch With A Healthy Punch

(NAPSA)—As America's youth prepares to hit the books, many parents are thinking about how their kids will feed both their minds and bodies once they head back to class. With the increased number of unhealthy foods and beverages available to kids today, parents should be concerned.

Yet, while so much attention is focused on childhood obesity, for most moms, there is another problem they feel is even more important. More than 65 percent of moms said that nutrient shortages in their children's diet is their primary concern, according to a recent survey by Impulse Research Corporation; obesity followed with 35 percent.

According to Jodie Shield, M.Ed., R.D., author of the *American Dietetic Association's Guide to Healthy Eating For Kids*, children today are not just overweight, they also are undernourished.

"What's most troubling today is that children are definitely eating enough food," said Shield, "but they're not consuming enough of the right foods to get the nutrients they need to be well-nourished rather than just overfed."

Nearly nine out of 10 teenage girls and almost seven out of 10 teenage boys in this country do not get enough calcium. Not only could skimping on calcium keep teens from reaching their full height potential, it may also lead to more serious health problems later in life, such as stress fractures and osteoporosis. Kids and teens need 1,300 mg of calcium daily to help build strong bones, the equivalent of about four servings of milk.

What's a parent to do?

Shield says there are many easy ways for parents to pump up the nutrition in their kids' diets. Many



Flavored milk can be a tasty way for kids to get the calcium they need every day.

kids slurp high-calorie, sugary beverages, which offer little to no nutrition while providing empty calories. By substituting nutrient-rich beverages, like flavored milk, for nutrient-void ones, parents create a win-win situation.

Banishing brown bag boredom

In addition to paying close attention to what kids are drinking, Shield suggests parents also stock up on healthy food options.

"By keeping tasty, grab-and-go, healthful snacks like trail mix, fresh fruit and flavored milk readily accessible as kids head to school or get home after a long day," she said, "parents can feel reassured that their kids are making smart food choices at home."

The following tips for parents can help kids get a nutritious jump start on the school year:

- Skip the chips and salty snacks and pack bags of baby carrots or bell pepper strips;
- Make individual servings of trail mix that kids can slip into their backpack. Blend unsalted nuts with dried fruits and whole

grain dry cereal; toss in some chocolate and peanut butter chips that will satisfy a kid's sweet tooth while giving them a healthful energy boost;

- Stock the kitchen with single servings of healthful foods like squeezable yogurts, individual puddings and bottles of flavored milk that kids can grab and go.

Research supports flavored milk as a healthy beverage

A University of Vermont study published in the *Journal of the American Dietetic Association* found that children and teens who drink flavored milk are more likely to meet their calcium requirements. They also were able to boost calcium without increasing total added sugar or fat, and drank more milk overall. Making the simple trade-off from soda or juice drinks to flavored milks can help parents improve the overall quality of their children's diet.

Moms know what's best

According to an Impulse Research Corporation survey, 96 percent of moms said that they would much rather serve their children milk as opposed to soft drinks. And 80 percent of moms said they would serve their children flavored milk if it meant they would drink more. Yet, almost 30 percent don't know that flavored milk is as nutritious as regular milk—it has the same nine essential nutrients as regular milk, including calcium, vitamin D and protein.

With the explosion of flavored milk choices, there are a variety of flavors from which to choose, from chocolate to strawberry to banana to vanilla to caramel; many are available in lowfat options.

For more information on the many flavors of milk, recipes and tips, log onto www.whymilk.com.