

Parents and Guardians,

Research tells us that healthy eating habits in children are important for both physical and cognitive development. You can encourage healthy eating habits in your child in many ways. You can use the following tips to get you started.

Offer your child a good breakfast.

It is important for children to start the day with a solid breakfast consisting of foods that will provide lasting energy. Children are able to focus on school work better if they are not thinking ahead to what's for lunch.

Prepare a healthy after school snack.

Have ready-to-eat snacks available for the mid-afternoon munchies. Some snack ideas include:

- Crackers and cheese
- Ginger snaps or fig bars
- Vegetable sticks
- Pre-packaged fruit cups
- Juice boxes
- Milk shakes

Eat healthy snacks with your child.

Young children learn by watching as well as listening. Children are more likely to want healthy snacks if they see you eating them.

Keep track of what kids eat with a food pyramid.

You and your child can keep track of what he/she eats with materials from The U.S. Department of Agriculture. The USDA provides a food guide pyramid for young children with specific portions and meal suggestions for kids ages 2-6, and offers a food chart for children to fill in each week to keep track of how many portions of meat, milk, vegetables, fruit, and grains they are eating. You can also download the full 20 page document *Tips for Using the FGP for Young Children Booklet* that provides the above documents plus much more. You can download these documents from

<http://www.fns.usda.gov/cnd/Care/Publications/kidspyramid.htm>.

