School Age Nutrition

School-aged children (ages 6 to 12) continue to need healthy foods and nutritious snacks. They have a consistent but slow rate of growth. They will usually eat four to five times a day (including snacks). Many food habits are formed during this time period. Family, friends, and the media (television, movies and the internet) influence their food choices and eating habits. Eating healthy after-school snacks are important because these snacks may contribute up to one-third of the total calorie intake for the day. Healthy food choices are guided by the Food Guide Pyramid, which can be found at www.mypyramid.gov.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Food Group</th>
<th>Examples of Foods</th>
<th>Number of Servings per Day</th>
<th>Serving size</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Grains (Include Several Servings of Whole Grain Products Daily)</td>
<td>Bread, Pasta, Rice, Ready to Eat Cereal Crackers</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>1 slice bread, ½ cup pasta or rice, ½ cup cooked cereal, ¼ cup ready to eat cereal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vegetables</td>
<td>Examples Include: Green beans, Broccoli, Carrots, Tomatoes</td>
<td>At Least 3</td>
<td>½ cup cooked, 1 cup raw</td>
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<tr>
<td>Fruit</td>
<td>Examples Include: Apple, Banana, Peaches, Oranges</td>
<td>At least 2</td>
<td>½ cup canned, 1 small, raw</td>
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<tr>
<td>Milk</td>
<td>Low Fat milk, Cheese, Yogurt</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1 cup milk, 1 ounce cheese, 1 cup yogurt</td>
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<tr>
<td>Meat</td>
<td>Chicken, Turkey, Beef, Fish, Egg</td>
<td>2-3</td>
<td>1 ounce meat, fish, or poultry, 1 egg, ½ cup cooked beans, 2 tablespoons peanut butter</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The following are some helpful mealtime hints for school-aged children:

• Always serve breakfast. Some ideas for a quick, healthy breakfast include:
  o fruit
  o milk
  o bagel
  o granola bars
  o cereal
  o peanut butter sandwich

• Take advantage of big appetites after school by serving healthy snacks:
  o fruit
  o vegetables and dip
  o yogurt
  o sandwich
  o cheese and crackers
  o milk and cereal

• Always set a good example

• Allow children to help with meal planning and preparation
  o Serve meals at the table, instead of in front of the television, to avoid distractions

Source: US Dept. of Agriculture (USDA)