Family Focus

Insert District Name Here | **Sept. 2019** | **Building a Foundation for School Success**

Getting Ready for School: Healthy Bodies & Healthy Minds

Meeting the health and nutrition needs of your preschool child and establishing regular routines is important for your child's success in school.

Why is this important for school readiness?

Growing bodies and minds need well balanced meals and snacks that include fruits, vegetables, meats, and fish. Calcium rich foods like milk and yogurt are important for building strong bones and teeth.

Children need the right amount of sleep. If children are healthy, rested, and feel well, they can focus on learning.

It's important that families establish routines for children: bedtime routines, daily routines of waking, dressing, hygiene practices such as washing their faces, and eating breakfast. Consistent routines give children a sense of security and they know what to expect. Routines help children develop self-discipline. Not knowing what to expect can make children feel anxious.

Young children need to move! They need to run, play outdoors, and make friends, so get outside whenever possible. Remember to limit screen time (TV, computers/tablets, smart phones) to 1-2 hours per day. When your child is in front of a screen, be certain that he or she is playing age-appropriate, non-violent video games or watching age-appropriate shows and movies.

Children learn that they are capable and important when families talk with them about their day. Teach them simple chores they can do successfully. When children experience success, they develop positive self-esteem and a "can do" attitude.

What can families do to help?

- Provide balanced meals that include all of the food groups. Limit sugars and fats.
- Provide healthy snack choices such as fruits, vegetables, yogurt, and healthy grains.
- Eat together as a family as much as possible, using this time for conversations.
- Model healthy eating practices for your child.

- Use your child's bedtime routine as a chance to read books and talk about his or her day.
- Provide sixty minutes a day of outdoor physical activity you can do with your child such as running, taking a walk, or going to the park together. Can't go outside? Try indoor activities that get arms and legs moving, like dancing together.
- Provide your child with age-appropriate equipment such as balls, hula-hoops, a bicycle or a tricycle.
- Provide a regular daily routine of tooth brushing and flossing. Visit the dentist with your child for regular check-ups.
- Give your child simple chores such as setting the table or watering plants. Praise them when they completed their chores.
- Learn about your child's preschool. Introduce yourself to the teacher. Talk with your child about his or her day at school. Who are his or her friends? What was the best part of the day?

Activities to do with your preschooler:

- Make a healthy snack together: ***Ants on a Log***
  You'll need: celery stalks cut into 3"-4" pieces, peanut or soy butter, nutella, or hummus, raisins, plastic knives, a plate. Show your preschooler how to spread the peanut or soybutter, nutella, or hummus on the celery stick. Count out the raisins or ants, and place them on the celery stick. It's fun to gobble up "ants"!

  (If you child doesn't like celery, use apple wedges instead of celery. It tastes great too!)
  Does your child have food allergies? Work with your child to learn to know the ingredients they are allergic to and ask before eating foods to make sure they are safe.

- Create a bedtime routine chart together: ***My Bedtime Routine***
  You'll need paper, crayons or markers, magazines (optional). List what your child needs to do to be ready for bed and a good night's sleep. Your child can draw the pictures or cut out pictures from magazines. You can also make the rows on the chart long so your child can check ☑ each step completed.

- Teach your child about healthy foods: ***Shopping Healthy Scavenger Hunt***
  The next time you go shopping, include your preschooler in the experience. For this activity you'll need a shopping list, a flyer from the grocery store, and crayons/markers for drawing.

  Identify 3-5 healthy foods from your shopping list your child can look for. Together create his or her own shopping list or "scavenger hunt". Use pictures from a flyer or have the child draw the items and write the word next to the picture. Then go shopping and have your child find and add the healthy food items to his or her own shopping cart and cross off the item on the list. Discuss why these are healthy foods with your child.

- Track your child's height: ***See How Much I've Grown!***
  You'll need a wall where you can mark your child's height every few months, or you can make or purchase a growth chart to show your child how she or he is growing.
  As you mark your child's growth, discuss what he or she needs to grow up healthy and strong.

- Sing a song to help your child wash his or her hands for at least 20 seconds: ***Hand Washing Song!***
  Teach your child this simple song sung to the tune of Row, Row, Row Your Boat: "Wash, wash, wash your hands, Soap will make them clean! Scrub the germs 'til they fall off, Germs go down the drain." Sing it twice and that's about 20 seconds!

- Get your child moving and having fun: ***Have a Dance Party!***
  All you need for this activity is some music and your dancing shoes! Dance with your child so he or she can get some exercise, have fun, and feel important because you're spending time with him or her.

"I am Healthy, Strong, Smart, and Ready for School!"

Online Resources for families:

The Choose My Plate website includes growth charts, how to include healthy eating styles, and activities for you to do with your preschooler.

Resources used for this tip sheet:

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's Positive Parenting Tips: Preschoolers

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