

YOU CAN HAVE IT ALL WHEN IT COMES TO HELPING YOUR CHILD EAT WELL AT HOME

We all know how important healthy eating is for our overall health – especially for children. These days, it's not always easy to make sure your kids are eating well. Lack of time to prepare healthy meals, uncertainty about the best food choices, and easy access to higher fat foods and sugary snacks seem to be the biggest challenges for Canadian parents when it comes to helping their school age children eat well.* The good news is there are some simple steps that can help parents overcome these challenges.

1. Be a role model

- ✓ Teach your kids to eat well by example – use *Canada's Food Guide* to inform your food choices and amounts*
- ✓ Choose high fat, low nutrient foods such as soft drinks, candy and fried snack foods less often.
- ✓ Drink more water, milk or 100% fruit juice and less pop.

2. Ask them!

- ✓ Involve your kids, regardless of their age, in planning and preparing meals

3. Be prepared

- ✓ Have healthy treats ready for when the “snack attacks” typically happen (like after school or sports practice)
- ✓ Eliminate the unhealthy competition and stock up on healthy snack foods like fresh fruit and veggies, yogurt, cheese sticks, nuts, whole grain breads, cereals and crackers.
- ✓ Whenever possible, cook meals in larger quantities and freeze the extras for a quick meal another day

5. Breakfast matters!

- ✓ Lay out your breakfast stuff the night before (set out the cereal boxes, cut up some fruit, check the yogurt supply in the fridge)
- ✓ Mix it up: cereal, toast, yogurt, waffles, oatmeal, pancakes, fruit, eggs... try to include choices from at least 3 of the 4 food groups in *Canada's Food Guide*.

* According to *Dietitians of Canada and Dairy Farmers of Canada 2004 report on Healthy Eating for School Age Children*

6. **Do dinner -- together!**

- √ Plan ahead and make it a family affair by choosing the menu together **
- √ To save time, mix and match home-prepared foods with the convenient pre-packaged stuff like roasted chickens and bagged salads.
- √ When eating out, look for the more nutritious choices. Choose baked, broiled or roasted items instead of those that are deep-fried.

(NOTE: A great family menu-planning tool can be found at: www.dietitians.ca click on *Eat well, Live Well > Let's Make a Meal!*)

7. **Help your children grow into a healthy body weight**

- √ Discourage dieting and skipping meals as ways to manage weight -- model and encourage healthy eating and active living instead
- √ Focus on overall health and well-being rather than weight management – remember that children's body weights naturally vary as part of their normal growth and development.

* For more information about how to make healthy food choices through better understanding of the nutrition information found on the food labels in your grocery store aisles, check out www.healthyeatingisinstore.ca