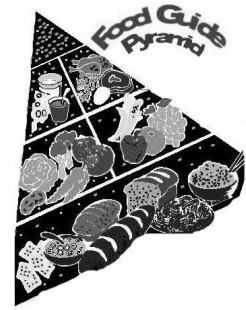




Grade 5: Parent Assignment #5 - Nutrition



Kids today are the first in history who will live less time than their parents. The primary reason for this is obesity, which is linked to an assortment of ailments. Childhood and teenage obesity rates have been skyrocketing over the past three decades, and the fatter you are, the sicker you are likely to become. According to a study conducted by Weight Watchers International, Inc. and the American Health Foundation, 25 percent of American children are now officially overweight.

Fast food takes a lot of the blame, but according to Ken Reed, Director of the Center for the Advancement of Physical Education, lack of exercise is the main offender. "Over the last 25 years, caloric intake in toddlers and young kids has gone up three or four percent, but the level of physical activity has dropped nearly 20 percent to 25 percent." Certainly we need to eat better but, more importantly, we need to find a way to get our kids exercising.

The government tells us that kids should exercise 60 minutes a day, but a study published in *The Lancet* in 2006 suggests that number is too low for optimal heart health. The study states that kids need about 90 minutes of daily exercise to avoid most heart disease risk factors. Given that kids should sleep about 10 hours a night, spend most of their day in school, and, according to the American Academy of Pediatrics, spend an average of five and one half hours a day in front of a TV, game, or computer, we don't need a study to show us that we face the challenge of fitting more activity into a day.

Nutrition, of course, is important too. With a Stop and Stuff on just about every corner, the opportunities to consume the wrong types of calories are abundant. Coupled with the fact that most schools offer low-grade foods to their students, we're starting with an uphill battle in this arena as well. It's not as gloomy as it sounds. Many of these trends can be easily reversed. In fact, with knowledge on what to avoid and by focusing a bit more on your child's physical fitness, you can pretty much assure that your child grows up strong and healthy.

Assignment: Choose at least one of the 10 steps below to do with your child:

1. Start your day with breakfast: Breakfast fills your "empty tank" to get you going after a long night without food. And it can help you do better in school. Easy to prepare breakfasts include cold cereal with fruit and low-fat milk, whole-wheat toast with peanut butter, yogurt with fruit, or whole-grain waffles.

2. Get Moving! It's easy to fit physical activities into your daily routine. Walk, bike or jog to see friends. Take a 10-minute activity break every hour while you read, do homework or watch TV. Climb stairs instead of taking an escalator or elevator. Try to do these things for a total of 30 minutes every day.

3. Snack smart: Snacks are a great way to refuel. Choose snacks from different food groups - a glass of low-fat milk and a few graham crackers, an apple or celery sticks with peanut butter and raisins, or some dry cereal. If you eat smart at other meals, cookies, chips and candy are OK for occasional snacking.

4. Work up a sweat: Vigorous work-outs - when you're breathing hard and sweating - help your heart pump better, give you more energy and help you look and feel best. Start with a warm-up that stretches your muscles. Include 20 minutes of aerobic activity, such as running, jogging, or dancing. Follow-up with activities that help make you stronger such as push-ups or lifting weights. Then cool-down with more stretching and deep breathing.

5. Balance your food choices - don't eat too much of any one thing: You don't have to give up foods like hamburgers, french fries and ice cream to eat healthy. You just have to be smart about how often and how much of them you eat. Your body needs nutrients like protein, carbohydrates, fat and many different vitamins and minerals such as vitamins C and A, iron and calcium from a variety of foods. Balancing food choices from the Food Guide Pyramid and checking out the Nutrition Facts Panel on food labels will help you get all these nutrients.

6. Get fit with friends or family: Being active is much more fun with friends or family. Encourage others to join you and plan one special physical activity event, like a bike ride or hiking, with a group each week.

7. Eat more grains, fruits and vegetables: These foods give you carbohydrates for energy, plus vitamins, minerals and fiber. Besides, they taste good! Try breads such as whole-wheat, bagels and pita. Spaghetti and oatmeal are also in the grain group. Bananas, strawberries and melons are some great tasting fruits. Try vegetables raw, on a sandwich or salad.

8. Join in physical activities at school: Whether you take a physical education class or do other physical activities at school, such as intramural sports, structures activities are a sure way to feel good, look good and stay physically fit.

9. Foods aren't good or bad: A healthy eating style is like a puzzle with many parts. Each part -- or food -- is different. Some foods may have more fat, sugar or salt while others may have more vitamins or fiber. There is a place for all these foods. What makes a diet good or bad is how foods fit together. Balancing your choices is important. Fit in a higher-fat food, like pepperoni pizza, at dinner by choosing lower-fat foods at other meals. And don't forget about moderation. If two pieces of pizza fill you up, you don't need a third.

10. Make healthy eating and physical activities fun! Take advantage of physical activities you and your friends enjoy doing together and eat the foods you like. Be adventurous - try new sports, games and other activities as well as new foods. You'll grow stronger, play longer, and look and feel better! Set realistic goals - don't try changing too much at once.



Livingston Youth and Community Services

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Student's Name: _____

Parent's Name: _____

Briefly describe your choice of assignment _____

Was this topic helpful? Yes/ No

Please explain _____

Parent Signature: _____ Date: _____

Raffle Entry

Grade 5: Parent Assignment #5 - Nutrition

Student's Name: _____ Parent's Name: _____

School: _____ Grade 5

Please complete this sheet and return to LYCS, PO Box 822, Livingston, NJ 07039,
Fax: 973-992-9318, email: lycs@livingston.org, or leave at reception in school