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## **Nutrition Notes – Sept '07**

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### **Nutrition & School Age Children**

This group needs adequate nutrients with appropriate calorie levels to avoid becoming overweight, yet fuel activity needs, growth and learning. Healthy choices are of utmost importance and choosing is a skill learned from role models. Parents/guardians are the best to provide healthy choices and choose them, themselves. To develop life-long healthy food habits: 1) Eat breakfast everyday 2) Prepare balanced lunches to take to school 3) Sit down to prepared meals with family most evenings, without TV. 4) Consume small healthy snacks when hungry, to keep the brain alert, and fuel physical activities. 5) Exercise daily!!!!

To determine specific needs consult [www.mypyramid.gov](http://www.mypyramid.gov). This is an interactive site that can help you understand more personal nutrition needs, for different ages & activity levels.

Have healthy food alternatives available at home. Spend quality time together grocery shopping and selecting favorite fruits and vegetables. Select foods that will be prepared for whole meals (not just snacks and deserts). Food preferences should be respected, but not obsessed over. Everyone can take turns trying new items. The “No Thank-you helping” taste is often effective here. There are no forbidden or magical foods, operative concepts here are variety and moderation. Avoid emotional attachment to specific foods, like sweets or chocolate, it creates a false reality for young people. Meals should be relaxed, stress-free family time enjoyed together. Children’s appetites vary, and they won’t starve or become malnourished from picking through food, or going on a peanut-butter and jelly diet for a week. Once the appetite returns, other healthy choices can fill the void. For snacks try colorful fruits & cut vegetables; 100% juices, water, or milk; cheeses; whole grain pita bread; and leftovers, instead of chips, candy, cookies, pastries, pizza and sweetened beverages. Young children need up to 6 small meals each day, whereas older children and teens need 3 regular meals plus a snack. Calorie needs usually run between 1800-2500 per day. Small portions are always advisable.

Recommendations here are general. For specific needs, problems or weight issues, consult a registered dietitian for guidance, such as *Healthy Directions of Poway* at 858-335-2140 or [www.healthydirectionspoway.com](http://www.healthydirectionspoway.com)