Suggested Newsletter Inserts for Elementary Schools

–Food and Nutrition

**Stay strong with good eating habits**

Help kids stay healthy and better able to fight off infections with these healthy eating tips:

* **Provide regular times to eat and snack** - Even though your daily routine has changed, set regular times to eat and stick to them! Allow only water to drink in between these times.
* **Let your kids decide how little or how much to eat** - Offer a variety of healthy options during planned meal and snack times and trust your kids to know how much their body needs to be satisfied.
* **Eliminate distractions during eating times** – Make meal and snack times free of electronics, screens and cell phones.
* **Plan healthy meals and snacks** - Write down enough meal and snack ideas for a week or two at a time. This will help shorten your time at the grocery store and make online shopping easier. It will also reduce multiple trips to the store.

Looking for more information to help keep you and your family healthy? Call Health Connection at 705-721-7520 or 1-877-721-5720 to speak with a public health nurse or visit the health unit’s website at [www.simcoemuskokahealth.org](http://www.simcoemuskokahealth.org/).

**Blast Off with Breakfast!**

Eating breakfast is one of the best ways to get your family off to a positive start to their day. It also helps support learning potential for your child. Try some of these quick breakfast ideas:

* Whole wheat tortilla wrap with scrambled eggs, cheese, peppers and salsa
* Whole grain crackers, cheese sticks and canned peaches
* Oatmeal with pumpkin seeds and berries
* Smoothie shake made with fruit, yogurt and toast
* Cereal trail mix, berries and yogurt
* Whole wheat pita spread with peanut butter and wrapped around a banana.

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**Pack a rainbow in your kid’s lunch**!

Pack a rainbow in your child’s lunch with colourful veggies and fruit! The more variety of colourful fruit and vegetables will increase intake of different nutrients. Try these kid friendly ideas:

* Add grated carrot or chopped cucumber to egg or tuna salad sandwiches.
* Pack veggies or fruit in small bite size pieces. Try watermelon, grapes, carrots, peppers, oranges, grape tomatoes.
* Add a shake of cinnamon to cut fruit if it tends to turn brown; it will also add flavour to their favourite apple or banana pieces.
* Send a small container of yogurt or pudding to dip fruit in, or send salad dressing, salsa, tzatziki or hummus for dipping veggies.

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**Packing a School Lunch**

A school lunch should give children the energy and nutrients they need to be ready to learn, be more alert and perform better at school. When planning lunches keep these tips in mind:

* Involve your kids – they are more likely to eat it if they have helped prepare or had input into what is packed.
* Include foods you know they love and will eat. If they are not adventurous eaters, they may not be willing to try new things in their lunches.
* Pack foods from Canada’s Food Guide, including a variety of vegetables and fruit, whole grains and protein foods.
* Make your own “lunch kit” with divided containers and small ‘bite-sized cheese cubes, left over chicken chunks, veggie sticks or fruit slices, rather than buying pre-made lunch kits.
* Offer a variety of veggies in different shapes and sizes…send cucumber coins, carrot sticks and pepper strips with dip.
* Fill wrap/pitas/tortilla shells with your child’s favourite foods such as hummus and grated carrot or sliced turkey with honey mustard.
* Send lots of water to drink.

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**Pack School Lunches with Safety in Mind**

Try these food safety tips to keep your child healthy at school:

* Pack their lunch in an insulated lunch bag or container.
* Keep cold food cold with mini ice packs or frozen water bottles.
* Keep hot food hot by using a thermos.
* Don’t forget to wash their lunch bag and containers in hot soapy water each night.

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**Classroom Celebrations**

Classroom and school celebrations are fun and exciting. They also often involve food.

If you decide to send food to enjoy during school celebrations, here are a few nutritious ideas:

* Send a tray of watermelon slices, box of clementines or fruit kabobs.
* Make homemade mini muffins with whole wheat flour and grated carrots or apple.
* Send a tray of whole grain crackers, cubes of lower fat cheese and grapes.
* Send a veggie platter, or get creative by arranging it in fun shapes for the holiday.
* Prepare chocolate dipped strawberries.

When celebrations happen outside of regular meal and snack times, it can be more challenging for students to listen to their hunger and fullness cues. Sending nutritious foods, instead of highly processed foods (like desserts or sweets), also helps to support students’ positive mental health.

Celebrations can be fun without food too!

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**Meal Time**

Meal time is a great time for families to get together and enjoy each other’s company, but we know it can also be a busy and hard time for some. It’s important to have realistic expectations about what your child is able to handle during mealtime, and how much they can eat. Try these suggestions to help avoid mealtime problems:

* Establish consistent mealtime routines.
* Prepare your child ahead of time - explain the rules at the table as well as rewards and consequences for certain behaviours.
* Have everything ready on the table before seating your child.
* Praise your child for following the rules.
* Stay calm and encourage the behavior you like.

For more information call Health Connection at 705-721-7520 or 1-877-721-5720 and speak with a public health nurse about Triple P Positive Parenting Program or visit the new Triple P Ontario website at [www.triplepontario.ca](http://www.triplepontario.ca).

**Water is the #1 beverage**

Healthy brains need to stay hydrated in order to learn and concentrate. That’s why it’s important for children to drink water all day long.

Drinking fountains are not always accessible at school, so it’s a good idea to send water in a reusable bottle with your child every day.

Sugar sweetened drinks like pop, juice, and fruit drinks do not provide the same benefits when it comes to staying healthy and hydrated. Water is the best option!

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**Energy Drinks**

Energy drinks claim to ‘make you more alert or have more energy’. They contain up to 10 teaspoons of sugar and the same amount of caffeine as 3 cups of coffee! These drinks should not be consumed by children, youth or people who are caffeine sensitive.

Parents: you play a key role in teaching your children and limiting their use of energy drinks. Offer your child drink options like water and milk most often. And remember, energy drinks should not take the place of foods or drinks that provide them with key nutrients needed for proper growth and development.

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**Are too many sugary drinks affecting your child’s health?**

What children drink each day has a major impact on their health. Drinking fewer sugary drinks is key for good nutrition, healthy teeth and staying hydrated.

Families play an important role in the choices children make. You can help your child make good drink choices by having less sugary drink choices available.

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**Nutrition and Self-regulation:**

Self-regulation: the ability to manage your own energy states, emotions, behaviours, and attention in ways that are socially acceptable and help achieve positive goals such as learning at school, having good relationships and being well.

Eating nutritious foods may improve your child’s ability to self-regulate

Eat more:

* **Plant-based foods**: colourful vegetables, fruits, whole grains
* **Proteins:** nuts, seeds, legumes, fish, seafood

Eat less:

* Foods with high amounts of sugar and sodium
* Highly processed, refined foods

Focus on:

* Water or milk to drink
* More than one type of food at every meal or snack
* Eating regularly
* Creating a calm, relaxing environment where you can enjoy your food and not feel rushed

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**Division of Responsibility**

Use the ‘Division of Responsibility’ to create positive mealtime experiences with limited distractions such as screens and electronics during mealtimes.

**Parent’s/Guardians choose what foods are packed for meals and snacks.** As they get older, youth can take a more active role in this. Each child’s food experiences, abilities and preferences are different.

**Students choose whether and how much to eat from what was packed.** Respect and trust students’ decisions about whether and how much to eat. This includes eating food in the order they choose. Trust students when they tell you they are full, or they are hungry for more.

**Schools and Educators choose when and where food is eaten during the school day.** Our school:

* Schedules meals and snacks at regular and consistent times.
* Allows access to water between meals.
* Offers students clean, comfortable place to eat.
* Is allergy aware and encourages students to wash their hands before and after mealtimes.

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The Power of Family Meals

Family dinners are important. Research shows that kids in families that eat together often tend to get better grades and are less likely to use alcohol, drugs and tobacco.

Gathering for a meal is more than just eating – it’s a time when everyone can talk about what’s going on in their lives.

* Make your dinner table a tech-free zone. No phone calls, texting, internet, TV screens, etc.
* Encourage everyone to contribute to the conversation. Give everyone a turn to talk, without being interrupted. Talk about what’s going on at school or work, tell jokes, or discuss current events.
* Stick around for clean-up. Give everyone a role to help out.

Sometimes it’s hard to have dinner all together, that’s ok! Find some other time to be together. What matters most is doing it as often as you can and then making the time worthwhile.

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The Real Cost of Unaffordable Food

As the cost-of-living increases everywhere, more and more people in Simcoe Muskoka do not have enough money to cover the cost of basic expenses and put enough food on the table (which is household food insecurity). Many community groups organize food donation drives to support those in need.

Are you thinking of donating to one of the many food drives taking place at this time of year?

Here are some things to consider about food donations:

* **Choose foods with nutrients -** canned vegetables and fruit, pasta sauce, whole grain hot and cold cereal, crackers, pasta, rice, oats and protein foods, such as: canned fish and meat, beans, lentils and chickpeas, nuts and seeds, peanut butter and other nut/seed butters.
* **Choose safe food** **-**Food banks must follow food safety rules and cannot accept food with missing labels, dented cans, damaged foods, home canned products, unpasteurized milk/juices.
* **Consider donating money -** Many food banks appreciate financial donations that can be used to buy perishable foods such as vegetables, fruits, milks, yogurt, and cheese at wholesale prices. Your school student nutrition program will also accept financial donations to support purchasing food for your school’s nutrition program. Contact the office to find out how to donate to the student nutrition program.
* **Avoid food drive competitions** - not every student can participate equally.

Donating food may meet an immediate need but it does not solve the problem of food insecurity. For more information visit [smdhu.org/realcost](http://www.smdhu.org/realcost)

For information about free and low cost meals in your community, dial 211 for free 24/7 confidential help.

Suggested Newsletter Inserts for Secondary Schools

– Food and Nutrition

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What youth drink each day has a major impact on their health.

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