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Living Well

Chelsea Richmond, Family and Consumer Sciences Agent
K-State Research and Extension, Flint Hills District

Start School Days with Breakfast

As the school year has begun, it is important to remember that breakfast is a must for kids. Skip breakfast, and kids will be playing nutritional catch-up for the rest of the day.

Consider the following breakfast tips to help your children start their day off right.

Breakfast doesn't have to mean traditional breakfast foods. Anything goes when it comes to breakfast, just as long as you maintain a healthy balance. So if kids want a change from cereal and eggs, consider serving leftovers from last night's dinner. There is nothing wrong with tuna fish with celery on a whole wheat English muffin or a turkey sandwich to start the day.

Give kids foods they like. It's neither necessary nor effective to feed kids foods they dislike. Do your kids turn up their noses at vegetables but love pizza? Leftover pizza with a whole-grain crust and veggies works for breakfast, too. Your kids love sugary cereal? Consider mixing a little bit of that cereal with a whole-grain, nutrient-packed healthier brand cereal.

Take growth and activity levels into account. Growing bodies and developing brains need nourishment. And, if kids are physically active they will need plenty of calories to keep them fueled. A breakfast that contains protein, fat, and carbohydrates helps children feel full and stay focused until lunch. Protein choices might include an egg, some nuts, a slice of deli meat or cheese, or a container of yogurt.

Don't take, "I don't have time for breakfast" as an excuse. Eating on the go doesn't mean forgoing breakfast. Make sure your kids grab a piece of fruit on the way out the door, and hand them a bag of nut-and-fruit trail mix or a whole wheat tortilla spread with peanut butter, and a carton of milk. Another option is a fruit-filled smoothie with milk or yogurt, which only takes a few minutes to drink.

Prep the night before. Mornings are usually a busy time for everyone. Take ten minutes to think ahead and prep for breakfast the night before. Chop up fruit to layer in a yogurt parfait or add to cereal. Cut up vegetables for an omelet. Get out a pan for pancakes or a blender for smoothies. Put a bowl of nut-and-fruit trail mix on the table for kids to grab as they head out the door.

Read the Nutrition Facts label and ingredient statements when you shop. The label makes it easy to compare the nutrients your kids are getting and compare them from product to product. Make sure your kids get nutrient dense foods that are low in salt and added sugars.

For more breakfast ideas, contact the Flint Hills Extension District office in Council Grove at 620.767.5136 or the office in Cottonwood Falls at 620.273.6491.