

[IMAGE]

Good Food, Good Summer: Helping Kids Eat Healthy

By Editorial Staff

In our world of convenience, nutrition often takes a big hit, and that's no more true than during the summer, when kids have way more time and their hands and, depending on their age, less supervision. That's a recipe for nutritional disaster if not properly managed. As a parent, what can you do? Here are three areas you can influence in terms of the nutritional choices available to your children this summer – not to mention throughout the year:

1. Think Fridge, Not Pantry: With processed, empty-calorie foods being churned out by food manufacturers at an all-time high, it's too easy to stock your pantry with these poor-nutrition items and let your kids have at it. A better option is to minimize the pantry choices and opt for a fully stocked fridge. Why? Simple: In many cases, things that need to be refrigerated generally are better for you than things that have an eternal shelf life. Natural, whole foods don't last forever, whereas foods filled with preservatives and artificial flavors / colors can stay in the cupboard for what seems like years. So give your kids lots of healthy fruits, vegetables, whole grains and lean proteins, and leave the chips, crackers and cookies off your shelves.

kid and junk food - Copyright © Stock Photo / Register Mark *2. Go With Cups Instead of Cans:* We're talking about replacing those endless cans of soda with water, of course, and it's particularly important during the summer months, when hot, dry weather and ample opportunity for outdoor activities merge to increase the body's H2O demands. Too little water throughout the day and your children could end up paying for it in the form of dehydration, constipation and other nasty health consequences. And let's not forget that soft drinks and other sugary beverages provide zero sustainable nutrition and may actually increase appetite, leading to weight gain.

3. Try Stove Instead of Microwave: Cheese sticks, mini pizzas, macaroni and cheese, burritos ... the list goes on and on. Many families turn to the microwave to prepare food more than the stove, which often means replacing healthier, whole-food options with frozen entrees, snacks and treats that lack in overall nutritive value. Believe it or not, in the time it takes to find space in your freezer for all those processed, frozen foods, you could probably be prepping healthier options that your kids can still turn to in a pinch – or that they can prep themselves if old enough, teaching a skill that will last them a lifetime.

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