

Nutrition & Mental Health

Eating patterns associated with positive mental health outcomes

For good health and all day energy for the brain and body, encourage:

- Eat breakfast every day and avoid skipping meals. Three meals and up to 3 snacks are needed for energy throughout day. Skipping meals has been associated with behavioral problems in adolescents.
- Choose 3-4 food groups at meals and at least 2 food groups for snacks. A good strategy is to fill half your plate with colorful vegetables and fruit and to fill the other half with protein and grain products.
- Choose whole grain foods to increase fibre intake and increase vitamin and minerals intake. Whole wheat bread, pasta, and brown rice are good options. Whole grains digest more slowly and will make your students feel energized for longer.
- Drink milk with meals and water in between meals. Dehydration will affect energy level and mood.
- Choose lean meat, poultry, fish, legumes, tofu, eggs, nuts and seeds with meals and snacks. Foods containing protein will help to keep us feeling full for longer.
- Encourage at least two servings of fish each week to help increase their intake of omega-3 fatty acids, which may help with positive mental health.
- Caffeine from coffee, tea, pop and energy drinks can affect student's mood and sleep. Caffeine can also make people feel agitated, irritable, nervous, and restless.
- Limit processed foods, fast food, high sugar drinks, and snack foods high in fat, sugar, and salt. These foods provide less nutrition & often replace healthy foods. Research has shown that these foods are associated with higher likelihood of emotional mental health problems in children/adolescents.

Nutrition & Mental Health - List of Resources

[My Food Guide](#)

[Healthy Eating Starts Here Website](#)

[Snacks for Children Handout](#) (low-literacy with pictures)