

The Wellness Family

Dr. Fairchild Keeps You Informed

A Well-Balanced School Year

It's that time of year again: shopping for school clothes and school supplies, getting ready for school lunches and after-school activities; it's enough to make your head spin. With childhood obesity on the rise, children being overscheduled and family time going by the wayside, Dr. Fairchild wants to share some information that can help you and your child enjoy a well-balanced school year.

A Well-Balanced Diet

Childhood obesity is becoming a rising concern, and with that concern many schools are pulling vending machines containing high-carb snacks and sugar-loaded sodas from their cafeterias. But will that really stop the problem when many school cafeterias aren't really providing healthy lunches.

If your child is among the 26 million children each school day that eat the nutritionally balanced, low-cost or free lunches provided by the National School Lunch Program, you may think that they are eating healthy. The reality is that the Physicians Committee for Responsible Medicine and the Healthy School Lunch Campaign says that the "menus served in school lunch programs are too rich in saturated fat and cholesterol and too low in fiber and nutrient-rich fruits, vegetables, whole grains, and legumes"?

The only true way to be sure that your child is eating a healthy lunch is to provide that lunch yourself, making sure to include fruits, vegetables and proteins in a well-balanced nutritional combination. Of course, this doesn't mean that your child can't have a cafeteria lunch on occasion, but it's not wise to trust the school to provide your child the nutritional balance he or she needs to get through the day.

It is best to limit your child to a cafeteria lunch one day a week. Since most schools provide a menu, pick the one day each week that the menu offers the most variety of high-protein and fiber rich foods and avoid the saturated fats and carbohydrates. The rest of the week, your child should be bringing lunch from home.

For ideas for healthy packed lunches visit the following:
<http://www.msnbc.msn.com/id/8913826/>

A Well-Balanced Backpack

Healthcare professionals agree that a child's backpack should never weigh more than 15% of the child's weight, as an overweight backpack has been proven to be linked to back and shoulder pain as well as headaches.

In a current study, the American Academy of Physical Medicine and Rehabilitation has exposed yet another potential danger from heavy backpacks: they promote falls. The results show that students who carry packs weighing 25% of their body weight exhibit balance problems while performing normal activities such as



"A child's backpack should never weigh more than 15% of their body weight."

climbing stairs or opening doors, which in turn increases their risk of falls; while students who carry packs weighing 15% of their body weight maintained their balance moderately well.

A well-packed backpack will ensure your child can keep their balance as well as avoid unnecessary strain on their developing spine. Take time to sit with your child and organize the books and supplies in his or her backpack. The heaviest objects should be packed first so that they are carried lower and closest to the body. Then lighter items should be equally distributed in the remaining space. Backpacks that have individualized compartments can help distribute the weight of the load more evenly and also keep items from shifting during movement.

It is important to watch the weight of your child's backpack throughout the school year. If you see your child lean forward to counter-balance the weight of their backpack, it's overweight. Additionally, take time each

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week to clean out your child's backpack, remove unnecessary items that are creating extra weight for your child to carry and encourage him or her to carry only the books that are necessary and to use lockers or desks frequently during the day.

A well-packed and properly carried backpack is an important part of enjoying a well-balanced school year.

A Well-Balanced Day

As your child begins a new school year they may be talking about after-school activities that interest them as well as asking for the newest video or computer game. Remember, when sorting through the many time-consuming activities that interest your child, that an overly-scheduled child will not be a well-balanced child.

A truly well-balanced day will have time for school, a few extra-curricular activities, family time and family mealtimes plus adequate sleep for the next busy day. A child that spends ten hours with school (preparing for, attending and traveling to and from), two hours with after-school activities or video games and TV, two hours doing homework and one hour eating and bathing, is not going to have time for family and still get adequate rest:

- The average elementary school child should be getting ten to eleven hours of sleep a night
- The average junior high school child needs at least ten hours of sleep per night
- The average high schooler can fair better with less sleep but still needs between eight and nine hours a night

The truth is that, if given the opportunity, most children (especially adolescents) will overfill their day with activities. It's important as parents to realize that an

overly-scheduled child will soon feel disconnected and their most important role is being part of a healthy, loving family unit.

Make spending family time a priority this school year by using the following family-balancing strategies:

1. Make family mealtimes a priority: dinner should be eaten together at least four out of five days of the week.
2. Make Sunday afternoons food-preparation time: do all the shopping and menu preparing on Sunday, then during the week you'll spend less time on dinner preparation and more time on family (even encourage your children to help you with your Sunday afternoon prep time).
3. Pick at least one day a week when you go "unplugged": no TV, no computer, no video games, no electronic distractions; instead have a family game night, or read a book together, whatever you choose to do, take time to talk with your children.

The Chiropractic Factor

Your doctor of Chiropractic is concerned about more than just your child's spine. If you are concerned about your child's diet or busy schedule, call today to schedule time to discuss your concerns with your family wellness Chiropractor. And if you're concerned about your child's backpack, then ask to schedule a backpack and postural screening.

Dr. Fairchild wants to help you and your child enjoy a well-balanced school year.

For additional information please visit:

www.icpa4kids.org

Dear Parent,

Dr. Fairchild is dedicated to providing you with the absolute best in family wellness care and along with that dedication comes an understanding that a well-balanced child is a healthier child. Take a moment today to ask your family Chiropractor any questions you may have about your child's overall health and wellness.

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