



The Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics marks August as “**Kids Eat Right Month,**” a fitting choice considering many kids go back to school. Among the many things we have to prepare for, don’t forget about eating the right foods to fuel your child’s day. Consider following this essential meal pattern to help your child thrive and start the school year off right.



## Breakfast

Eating a balanced breakfast can improve school performance, increase energy levels, and can make a difference in overall health and well-being.

**Tips:** Instead of settling for a sugary cereal, plan for a balanced breakfast that includes a protein-rich food (eggs, 100% natural peanut butter, Greek yogurt, low-fat milk, beans, cottage cheese, slice deli meats ,etc) and a whole-grain carbohydrate (whole-grain toast, wheat English muffin, wheat pita bread, whole-grain frozen waffle, etc).

**Ideas:** Top a frozen waffle with Greek yogurt and berries; make a breakfast sandwich with one egg and one slice Canadian bacon inside a whole-grain English muffin; top a slice of whole-grain toast with peanut butter and sprinkle with ground flax seed for added fiber. Feel free to add a piece of fruit!

## Lunch

Depending on what the school cafeteria sells or if there is enough time to wait in line, children may often skip lunch at school. This may mean difficulty concentrating, a lack of energy for after school activities, and a greater chance of eating less nutritious snacks.

**Tips:** Whether children eat a school-provided lunch or bring lunch to school, focus on a nutrient dense meal that will sustain them through the end of school. To create a healthy lunch, include one of each food group: one protein, one whole-grain, one fruit, one vegetable and one milk choice.

**Ideas:** If bringing lunch, try using a lunch box with several small compartments. Some ideas include: ½ wheat pita bread filled with sliced turkey meat and sliced cheese, with a side of berries and baby carrots; Whole-grain crackers with side of hummus, cucumber and apple slices, and carton of low-fat milk; two slices of chicken and cheese quesadillas, with side of sliced bell peppers and grape tomatoes served with cubed mango.

## After-School Snacks

Whether your child is gearing up for an after school activity or getting ready to study, a healthy snack before dinner is important to keep the energy levels up. Don’t forget to pack plenty of water if your child is participating in a sport!

**Tips:** Incorporate fruit and vegetables as healthy snacks to replace highly processed snack foods like cookies and chips. Make them fun by adding dips (hummus, dressings, peanut butter, yogurt dips).

**Ideas:** Homemade trail mix (nuts, dried fruit, whole-grain pretzels); string cheese and fruit slices; celery and almond butter; Baked tortilla chips dipped in salsa; Whole-wheat tortilla with sliced turkey breast and cheese heated in the microwave; carrot sticks and dressing.

Source: [www.eatright.org](http://www.eatright.org)