

*Each month during the school year NNHS distributes a "Healthy Huskies Letter." The goal of the newsletter is to enhance our the school's partnership with families, particularly by sharing our knowledge of various topics related to your child's social, emotional, and physical health, and what our school and our families can do to promote student healthiness. Each issue will address a different health topic and will contain resources for further exploration of that topic. Staff at NNHS as well as the School, Family, Community Partnership (SFCP), will be advisors for these newsletters; we encourage parents and students to suggest topics and resources. Send suggestions to [kpobst@naperville203.org](mailto:kpobst@naperville203.org).*

## Healthy Huskies Letter

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There is abundant evidence that what students eat and drink has a significant effect on their mood, energy, alertness, focus, attention span, and the behavior choices they make. Better eating correlates to better achievement. The focus of this Healthy Huskies Letter is on student snacking and hydration.

We know that many parents encourage healthy eating at home. Yet, teens spend hours of time at school each day. When they are involved in activities and athletics, many students are here from 7:00 AM until late in the evening. Much of the eating students do takes place at school. The school district contracts with Sodexo for our lunch program, you can see the options available to students at [this link](#). Vending machines make drinks and snacks available to students within Board of Education policy. Some of the machines are serviced by Sodexo and some by Coca-Cola corporation.

We want to promote healthy snacking and abundant hydration. Toward that end, we want to encourage snacks to come from home—they will be healthier and less expensive. The conversations you have with your children about snacking will contribute to the cultivation of life-long healthy eating habits. Healthy snacking will contribute to their social-emotional health and academic achievement at school.

### Our advice.

- **Breakfast.** It is disturbingly remarkable how many students do not eat a healthy breakfast. At the very least they should bring with them, on the bus or to eat before their first class, healthy, convenient food and drink.
- **Hydrate, hydrate, hydrate.** Students should carry a water bottle and drink continuously throughout the day. The school has installed several bottle-filling stations throughout the campus. A hydrated brain works better than a dehydrated one.
- **Snacking is good.** Students should not confine themselves to three meals. Teens should eat and drink throughout the day. Long gaps cause blood sugar to drop leading to craving and "grab and go" decisions that lead to poor nutritional choices.
- **Snacking from home is best.** Carrying healthy snacks from home makes it easier to eat the right thing when hunger comes on. Hunger without a readily available snack leads to cruising the vending machines which are often, unfortunately, a source of sugar and fat.
- **Plan ahead.** Take the time on a weekend to find healthy options that can be carried to school. Inform yourself about what will be healthy, appealing, and convenient and make sure a week's worth of such snacks are available. Again, we want students to avoid "grab and go" decisions.
- **Slow.** Slow eating stretches the pleasure and satisfaction. Food that must be eaten with fingers beats food eaten with a fist! Cheerios, raisins, almonds, and baby carrots lend them one-by-one munching.

- **Deficit reduction!** Choose vegetables and fruit as snacks. This is the most neglected food group in most teens' diet. Snacking on veggies and fruit is a great way to reduce that deficit. Fruit and vegetables are not necessarily more expensive than pre-packaged snacks, and the preparation time can be modest.
- **Train Taste.** When you are hungry, eat healthier, fresher foods so your palate will accept them better. Yes, we often develop a taste for unhealthy food and drink, but we can retrain our taste buds to enjoying healthy foods.
- **Cut em up, put em in a baggie.** Snacks sent to school need not be pre-packaged. Many students get what they really want by customizing their snacking. In addition to carrots, dried fruit, and nuts, there are many other great choices (below), like berries, cut-up citrus, smaller fruits (apricots, kiwi, mandarins), frozen grapes or berries, frozen cut-up melon, etc.
- **Create incentives.** Create a reward system for healthy snacking at home. If teens get in the habit of healthy snacking at home, they will be more likely to continue these choices at school, as well as throughout their adult lives.
- **Read.** Please read the packaging. A lot of packaged snacks that are marketed as healthy have added sugar and oils that turn what could have been healthy into just another source of sweet and fat calories.

#### Suggestions.

- **Water.** Lots of water.
- **Drinks.** There are good flavored or bubbly water drinks that do not have added sugar. Juice should really be juice, at least 50%; aim for 100%. Low fat milk, soy and rice drinks. Avoid "sugar water:" Capri, V8 Splash, Tropicana Twisters, Sunny D, Kool Aid Jammers, Hi C (there may be some "light" options that are okay).
- **Don't drink soda.** Research indicates that the high fructose corn syrup in drinks may shut off our brain's mechanism of feeling full and therefore we over-consume calories. With diet soda, even though there's no sugar in there, there are a lot of chemicals—artificial sweeteners and sodium. Artificial sweeteners can be dehydrating; the citric acid is bad for your teeth.
- **Fruit.** Fruit cups, applesauce, dried fruit, fruit leather, Clementines, small apples. Avoid packaged fruit with sweetened syrup or oil treatment.
- **Veggies.** Baby carrots (one of the great inventions of the late 20<sup>th</sup> century), celery, cucumber, peppers, string beans, little tomatoes, zucchini, edamame.
- **Dips.** Truly low fat salad dressing and hummus can stimulate a teen's appetite for raw veggies. Be careful, dressings can be full of fat and sugar.
- **Whole grains.** Cereal can be a good snack source for grains. Good choices are Cheerios, Grape Nuts, Chex, Frosted Mini Wheats, various flakes like Wheaties. But, avoid any cereal that has more than 35% sugar. Be careful of cookies, snack cakes, rice krispy treats—any kind of grains welded together with sugar.
- **Crackers.** Triscuits, Rye Krisps, matzo, rice cakes, home-popped popcorn, baked chips, pretzels, breadsticks, flat breads. Again, choose items with less than 35% sugar.
- **Granola bars.** Nature Valley and Quaker make many options that are not just sugar and fat delivery devices. Again, choose items with less than 35% sugar.
- **Dairy.** Make sure the yogurt is low fat. There are low-fat cheese stick options; white cheese is often lower in fat than orange cheese.
- **Nuts.** Some trail mix is healthy, but, again, be careful, some mixes coat healthy items in sugar or grease them in oil.

## RESOURCE WEBSITES:

The Nutrition Source: <http://www.hsph.harvard.edu/nutritionsource/>

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Go to this home page and use the left-hand navigation column to select the issues or topics that you want to use to support the healthy choices of our teens. There is a section called "Nutrition in the News" where you can read about recent media coverage and events featuring faculty and researchers from the Department of Nutrition at Harvard School of Public Health. Last year's articles are connected to many of the recent hot topics such as diabetes, obesity, and sugary soft drink impact.

Other sites:

<http://www.nutrition.gov/> Source of American Dietary Guidelines and Choose MyPlate info. Also choose the "other Gov sites" from the tool bar at the top for more website info.

<http://www.eatright.org/Public/> Chose from the left-hand navigation column to pick the nutrition topic of interest.

<http://www.nlm.nih.gov/medlineplus/nutrition.html> Resource Web site with many nutritional articles. Search the entire Web site's icon bars on the side as well as the articles toward the bottom.

[http://cspinet.org/nutritionpolicy/kids\\_snacks.pdf](http://cspinet.org/nutritionpolicy/kids_snacks.pdf)

[http://cspinet.org/nutritionpolicy/healthy\\_school\\_snacks.html](http://cspinet.org/nutritionpolicy/healthy_school_snacks.html)

<http://www.feingold.org/PF/wisconsin1.html>

Please consider Naperville North High School to be your partner and reach out with questions or suggestions.