

## Healthy Huskies Letter

### Healthy Snacking and Hydration

Abundant research shows what students eat and drink has a significant effect on their mood, energy, alertness, focus, attention span, and behavior choices they make. Although healthy snacking is always encouraged for teens, during the school year, this crucial information is even more relevant and important. Better eating also correlates to better academic achievement.

We know that many parents encourage healthy eating at home. Yet, teens spend many hours at school each day. If they are involved in activities or athletics, many students are at NNHS from early in the morning until late in the evening. Much of students' eating takes place at school. Our school district contracts with Aramark for our lunch program and you can see the options available to students [at this link](#). Drinks and snacks are also available to students at vending machines, supplied with items the Board of Education has approved.

We want to promote healthy snacking and abundant hydration in our NNHS students. If teens get into the habit of healthy snacking at home, they will be more likely to continue to make these choices at school. The conversations you have with your children about snacking will contribute to life-long healthy eating habits.

### Healthy Advice

**Breakfast.** It is remarkable how many students do not eat a healthy breakfast before they go to school. At the very least, they should take a healthy, convenient to-go food and drink for the bus or once they get to school. Some teachers will allow students to snack during class. Inquire.

**Hydrate, hydrate, hydrate.** Students should carry a water bottle and drink throughout the day. There are several bottle-filling stations at NNHS. A hydrated brain functions better than a dehydrated one.

**Snacking is good.** Students should not confine themselves to three meals a day. Teens should eat and drink throughout the day. Long gaps without food cause blood sugar to drop, often leading to snack decisions that are poor nutritional choices.

**Plan ahead.** Take the time on weekends to find healthy snack options that can be brought to school. Make sure a wide variety and a week's worth of snacks are available at home.

**Choose wisely.** Choose vegetables and fruit as snacks. These are the most neglected food groups in most teens' diets. Fruit and vegetables are not necessarily more expensive than pre-packaged snacks, and the preparation time can be minimal.

**Train taste buds.** Teens often develop a taste for unhealthy snacks and drinks, but taste buds can be retrained to enjoy healthy foods. Choose healthy, fresh foods for snacks.

**Read.** Be informed. A lot of packaged snacks that are marketed as healthy have added sugar and oils. This turns a healthy snack into just another source of calories. Read the labels carefully.

## Snacking Suggestions

**Drinks.** First, choose water. To jazz it up, there are good flavored or bubbly water drinks that do not have added sugar. Low fat milk, soy and rice drinks are good sources of hydration, as are 100% juice drinks.

**Avoid soda.** Research indicates that the high fructose corn syrup in drinks may shut off the brain's mechanism of feeling full and lead to the over-consumption of calories. Even though diet sodas are sugar free, they contain chemicals, artificial sweeteners and sodium.

**Fruit.** Fruit cups, applesauce, dried fruit, fruit leather, clementines, and small apples are all good snack choices. Avoid packaged fruit with sweetened syrup.

**Veggies.** Delicious and healthy options include baby carrots, celery, cucumber, sweet peppers, string beans, little tomatoes, zucchini, and edamame. Low fat salad dressing and hummus (which comes in many flavors) can stimulate a teen's appetite for raw veggies.

**Whole grains.** Cereal can be a good snack source for grains. Good choices are Cheerios, Grape Nuts, Chex, Frosted Mini Wheats, and various flakes like Wheaties. Avoid any cereal that has more than 35% sugar. Steer clear of cookies, snack cakes, rice krispy treats—any kind of grains held together with sugar.

**Crackers.** Triscuits, matzo, rice cakes, home-popped popcorn, baked chips, pretzels, breadsticks, or flat breads are popular healthy, crunchy snacks.

**Granola bars.** Nature Valley and Quaker make many options. Choose items with less than 35% sugar.

**Dairy.** Choose lowfat yogurt or cheese sticks. Both come in a variety of flavors and textures.

**Nuts.** Some nuts and trail mix are healthy, but read the labels. Some granola mixes coat healthy items in sugar.

## Resources

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

Source of American Dietary Guidelines: <http://www.nutrition.gov>

Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics: <http://www.eatright.org/Public>

U.S. National Library of Medicine: <http://www.nlm.nih.gov/medlineplus/nutrition.html>

Center for Science in the Public Interest:

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

Please consider Naperville North High School to be your partner. Contact us with questions or suggestions.