



## SCHOOL TO HOME FALL

### Family Connection Features:

- Bed Times & Sleep Needs
- Feelings & Back-to-School Jitters
- Family Meals & Meal Planning Tips
- What's For Lunch?
- Walking/Biking to School
- Home to School Activity Charts (see parent/student signature page 8 due date: \_\_\_\_\_)

### Off To a Fresh Start!

#### School Year Schedules and Routines

Back-to-School season is a time for fresh starts and new routines. It's also a great time for getting back on a regular family schedule. Sometimes that's easier said than done, we know!

After summer months of late nights and sleeping in most mornings, many kids find it hard to quickly snap back to the school timetable come fall.



## SCHOOL TO HOME

# WELLNESS – EVERY PART COUNTS!

### Bed Times & Sleep Needs

Doctors and educators note that school-age children need adequate sleep each night in order to be healthy, active and mentally alert each day. And different family members need different amounts of sleep, based on their age. One size does not fit all! Here are the official recommendations:

Preschool (age 3–5)	10–13 hours a night
Elementary/Middle School (age 6–13)	9–11 hours a night
Teenager (age 14–17)	8–10 hours a night

If your child is having a hard time, try to get them to wind down earlier, unplug from electronics, darken their bedrooms, and follow some other tips below. Establish a consistent bedtime, whether they're tired or not, and encourage them to find some quiet activities like reading, breathing exercises, or old-fashioned "counting sheep" to help them fall asleep.

Remember, the sooner you get the children to bed, the better the chance you'll have of getting to bed on time yourself! Adults rarely get the 7–9 hours they need each night.

### Feelings and Back-to-School Jitters

Children of all ages experience a range of feelings during the first month or so of school. New classes, new teachers and new beginnings can cause excitement, worry and other feelings in between. As the year goes on, there will be different feelings to deal with. It's healthy to talk about these feelings, but it's not always easy to find time.

If your child is hesitant to talk about their feelings, ask them to draw you a picture instead. Creative activities like drawing can help your child express and manage difficult emotions. After asking, "How was your day?" ask, "Can you draw me a picture about your day, too?" Here are some other prompts:

- What helps you feel brave?
- What helps when you are sad?
- What helps you when you are worried?
- What makes you feel happy?

Journaling is a healthy and creative exercise for people of all ages. Encourage your child to start a "Feelings Journal" at home for writing and drawing, and you could be planting the seeds for a lifelong habit. Watch this video for inspiration:

[Video: Exploring Feelings](#) | PBS Kids



## SCHOOL TO HOME

# WELLNESS – EVERY BITE COUNTS!

### Family Meals: Fall back into your routine (or start fresh!)

Preparing and sharing meals together is a valuable way to teach children about cooking, and to ensure they eat a variety of nutritious foods. They're more inclined to try new foods when they help prepare them. Studies show that children who share meals with their family do better in school, too.

But the main benefits of eating together as a family go beyond what's on the plates. Sharing meals draws family members together to bond, talk about their day, and connect in meaningful ways. It is an important component of overall wellness for each family member. As your student is learning in school, wellness is about physical health, but also about social and mental/emotional health in equal measures.

Some of the long-term benefits of family meals?

- Families tend to eat a more balanced diet when they eat together, [research shows](#). And when young children eat dinner frequently with their families, they are less likely to be overweight.
- Eating together as a family helps teenagers get better grades and keeps them away from cigarettes, alcohol and drugs, according to the National Center on Addiction and Substance Abuse at Columbia University.
- Family meals allow space for family members to communicate, connect and relax.

But how can you actually make it happen? Here are a few tips from Miriam Weinstein, author of *The Surprising Power of Family Meals*:

### Start where you are

If you never eat together as a family, start with a birthday or other celebration. If you eat together one night a week, aim for two.

### Make the meal happen

Things are easier to fit into schedules when we make them habits or rituals. When you are organizing your calendar, put dinner in first. Make a shared meal the rule, not the exception.

### It's important!

Let all family members know that the family meal is important. It will help everyone get to the table and, once there, best take advantage of the time together.

### Give them something to do

If you're dining with kids, make them part of the group by giving them age-appropriate activities (passing out forks, helping clean up) and conversation to help them participate.

### Read more here:

[The Lifelong Importance of Family Meals](#) | Together Counts Blog

**MyPlate, MyWins Tips: Making Family Meals**

Family meals around the table provide an opportunity to spend time together. Try these tips to help your family enjoy mealtimes together:

**Plan your meals** – Avoid stress at mealtime by planning a weekly menu and posting it in a location for everyone to see, like a chalkboard in the kitchen.

**Prep ahead** – Have ingredients for the week ready. After you shop, cut vegetables and measure ingredients in advance for easier meals.

**Make mealtime a priority** – Make time for family meals when planning your household’s schedule each week. Try to cook, eat up, and clean up together!

**Think beyond dinner** – If evenings are too hectic at your house, consider other meals for family time such as a weekend brunch or even afternoon snack time.

**Keep meals fun and focused** – Keep the family table a media- and stress-free zone. Use your valuable family time to “unplug,” interact, and focus on each other.

Note: You may download color copies of the tips above in English or Spanish from the following link:

[www.choosemyplate.gov/myplate-mywins-tips-making-family-meals](http://www.choosemyplate.gov/myplate-mywins-tips-making-family-meals)

**Remember: Milk (Still) Matters**

Children of every age, and adults too, need the calcium, protein, and vitamin D found in milk for strong bones, teeth, and muscles.

- Get in the habit of serving and drinking milk at meals.
- If you or your kids are lactose intolerant, try lactose-free or lactose reduced milk or calcium-fortified soy beverages.

**Kids’ Craft Activity: Make-Your-Own Family Placemats**

Make homemade placemats for each member of your family. Parents and kids should all join in! This is a fun way to get families more committed to eating together at the dinner table. Here are some ideas, but feel free to come up with some creative ones of your own:

- Cut one piece of colored construction paper into horizontal strips. Cut another piece of construction paper (a different color) into vertical strips. Weave the two of them together and secure them in place with glue or clear tape on the back.
- Make a collage on a piece of construction paper, using cutout pictures of colorful fruits and vegetables.
- Use a compass to make geometric designs on different colors of construction paper.
- Write compliments and positive messages on construction paper and decorate with cheerful illustrations.

Use these placemats at your family dinner table for a meal or two, or laminate them to make them last all year long. Extra: Make place cards with family members’ names. For special occasions or holidays, make extra ones for relatives and guests.

**What’s For Lunch?**

Whether you prefer packing your child’s lunch or having them opt for the cafeteria, there are more tasty and nutritious options than ever before. Get inspired with these tips and recipes.

[11 Healthy Packed Lunches for School](#) | SPARK and Together Counts Blog

[School Lunch Ideas From a Dietitian](#) | Together Counts Blog

Tip: Today's school lunches are healthier than the ones you remember from your childhood. Check out your school's lunch menu a week in advance and ask your child to choose which ones they'd like to eat. Then you can supplement with different kinds of lunch items to pack on other days, to get a variety of different foods in their diet. No time for packing lunches? No worries! Focus on having some easy, healthy after-school snacks on hand instead.



## SCHOOL TO HOME

# WELLNESS – EVERY MOVE COUNTS!

### Incorporate “60 a Day” Into Your Daily Routines

Back-to-school season is also an excellent time to look for new ways to add more physical activity to your everyday routines. The Physical Activity Guidelines for Americans recommend that children and teens ages 6 to 17 do 60 minutes (1 hour) or more of physical activity each day. All year long we’ll be stressing the “60 a Day” goal in our schools and need your help at home to keep up the momentum!

### Try 15 Minute Activity Bursts!

How can you help? Encourage kids to get off the couch and be active. Short bursts of activity are fine! If kids are antsy waiting for dinner time, have them run outside for 15 minutes. If neighborhood safety is a concern, have them do 15 minutes of vigorous activity indoors. Set a kitchen timer or alarm clock and instruct them to do jumping jacks, star jumps, jogging in place and other aerobic exercise for 15 minutes. Or put on music and tell them to dance like crazy! When time’s up, they can add those 15 minutes to their “60 a Day” charts (if they brought them home from school in their homework folders), or they can record them on a piece of paper and bring it to school the following day to complete their charts there.

### Jump on the “Walk to School” Bandwagon

Looking for more ways to integrate more physical activity into your child’s everyday routine? Consider having them walk to school. More and more people are discovering the benefits — physical, social, mental/emotional as well as environmental — of walking or biking to school. New programs have been implemented to address parents’ concerns about safety as well. Every October there’s a designated day or week to give it a try. (Next up: October 10, 2018 and October 2, 2019)

International Walk to School Day is a global event that involves communities from more than 40 countries walking and biking to school on the same day. It began in 1997 as a one-day event. Today, thousands of schools across America — from all 50 states, the District of Columbia, and Puerto Rico — participate every October. Since becoming so popular, the entire month of October has been designated “Walk to School Month” in many districts. Schools around the world have different traditions as well: like WoW (Walk on Wednesdays) and “green” Walking Weeks.

Ever heard of a “walking school bus”? Basically, it’s a group of children walking to school with one or more adults. It’s as simple as that! You get the camaraderie of the school bus, but with exercise and fresh air. It can be as informal as two families taking turns walking their children to school or as structured as a route with meeting points, a timetable and a regularly rotated schedule of trained volunteers. For a variation on the walking school bus, try a “bicycle train,” and give adults an extra workout as they supervise children while they cycle.

Learn more by visiting this link from the U.S. Department of Transportation: [www.walkingschoolbus.org/](http://www.walkingschoolbus.org/)

## **The Benefits of Walking or Biking to School**

### **Family and Community Connections**

When walking or biking, parents and children get to appreciate things they don't notice while driving—listening to the sounds of the neighborhood, seeing friends and neighbors and feeling connected with their community. Parents, children and friends can enjoy one another's company without the usual distractions. These events and ongoing practices bring schools and communities together for a common purpose. Most of all, they are fun!

### **Physical Health Benefits**

Regular physical activity helps children build strong bones, muscles and joints, and it decreases the risk of obesity and chronic diseases. Research suggests that physically active kids are more likely to become healthy, physically active adults, underscoring the importance of developing the habit of regular physical activity early.

### **Mental/Emotional Wellness and Academic Performance**

This physical activity gives the brain a boost, too. Children move out of their "morning fog" more quickly, burn off some of their excess energy, and are more able to focus in lessons. They arrive invigorated and more alert, ready to get to work. Studies from around the world back this up. As physical fitness improves, so does academic performance, according to the California Department of Education. In a UK Department for Transport survey, nine out of ten teachers said their students are much more ready to learn if they've walked to school. A study in Denmark found that kids who biked or walked to school performed measurably better on tasks demanding concentration, such as solving puzzles, and that the effects lasted for up to four hours after they got to school.

### **Practical Life Skills**

Walking is active, not passive, and gives kids more experience to observe things in their environment and make some decisions on their own. It gives children an opportunity to be independent, think responsibly and demonstrate good judgment. It also:

- teaches road safety skills
- increases geographical awareness and navigation skills
- instills healthy habits that can last a lifetime

Walk to School Day – October 10, 2018 and October 2, 2019

To find out more or to plan an event in your community, visit [www.walkbiketoschool.org](http://www.walkbiketoschool.org).

**Home to School Wellness Charts**

<b>FAMILY ACTIVITIES</b>	<b>Date(s)</b>	<b>Notes: Did you have fun? Any tips to share?</b>
Sharing a Family Meal		
Helping to Prepare a Family Meal		
Making Placemats and/or Place Cards		
Walking/Biking to School		
Other Physical Activity		

<b>SLEEP CHART</b>	<b>Sunday</b>	<b>Monday</b>	<b>Tuesday</b>	<b>Wednesday</b>	<b>Thursday</b>
Bedtime					
Wakeup Time					
Hours Slept					
<i>Was this easy or hard? Don't worry, keep trying to reach your goal! What new strategies can you try next week to get to bed earlier? Notes:</i>					

**Signatures**

Student's signature \_\_\_\_\_

Parent/Guardian's signature \_\_\_\_\_

Teacher's signature \_\_\_\_\_