



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

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/

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.

Home to School Wellness Charts

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

SLEEP CHART	Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday
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 _____



SCHOOL TO HOME WINTER

Family Connection Features:

- Tips for Keeping Active in Winter
- Healthy Bodies, Healthy Minds!
- Focus on Frozen & Canned Fruits & Veg
- Strive for 60 Minutes a Day
- Intergenerational Dance!
- Home to School Activity Charts (see parent/student signature page 8 due date: _____)

Avoid the Winter Slump!

Live in a cold part of the country? Don't let the frigid temps slow you down. Keep hats and mittens on hand in an easy to find spot, like a basket by the door. Have kids bundle up and play outside in 15-minute bursts if it's too cold to stay out longer. Once they get running around, they'll warm up and likely play for longer. Reward them with hot chocolate for a snack or dessert (kids their age need 4 servings of calcium-rich dairy a day!) and they'll warm up before they know it. They'll also be more alert for homework time and better able to settle down to bedtime at a reasonable hour.

At school we're continuing to work on our "60 a Day" charts to reach our goals of 60 minutes of moderate to vigorous physical activity every day (that's 7 days a week). The winter months can require extra motivation to keep moving, as shorter days and school vacations often find kids watching more television, playing more video games, and engaging with phones and devices. And all this comes at a time when many of us are overindulging on holiday feasts and treats. Help us remind kids that this means they need to spend even MORE time on the move!

We've added an extra "60 a Day" Physical Activity Chart at the end of this lesson for your child to use at home, especially on weekends and during vacation weeks. Who knows? It may inspire other family members to get moving as well!



SCHOOL TO HOME

WELLNESS – EVERY PART COUNTS!

Family Activity: Healthy Bodies, Healthy Minds!

The winter season can find parents more stressed due to holidays and expectations, and children more sedentary with energy levels that could use a boost. Here are some simple exercises to help clear your mind and reset your mood. We're doing some of these at school — so ask your kids to show you how!

Relax and Unwind

Shoulder Shrug – Take a slow, deep breathe in while shrugging your shoulders, lifting them high up to your ears. Hold 3 seconds and then release. Repeat three times.

Yes and No – Shake your head slowly from side to side and then up and down. Pretend you're saying No, No, No 6 times and then Yes, Yes, Yes 6 times. Repeat.

Bear Hug – Give yourself a great big hug and release the tension in your back while you're at it. Put your right hand on your left shoulder and your left hand on your right shoulder.

Now breathe in and out deeply, gently squeezing the area between your shoulder blades.

Family Activity: Everyday Desk Exercises

Fitness doesn't only happen at the gym! You don't need a sports field or court either. They can be done at a desk in an office, at the kitchen table, or while you're sitting in your living room. Students are taught how to do them in the classroom or at home, whenever they need a homework break, a cool down or a pick-me-up.

In addition to adding to your 60 minutes a day goal (the Physical Activity Guidelines are for adults as well!). They are a great way to energize your body and mind. Do these while sitting at a desk or table, or standing next to a chair. Make sure to keep a safe distance from furniture and from each other.

Seated Stretches

- Stretch your legs, one at a time, until they are perfectly straight with pointed toes. Hold for 10 seconds at a time, then slowly lower them back to the floor.
- Rest your heels on the floor and flex your toes straight up toward the ceiling. Hold for 10 seconds, then release and repeat.
- Lift both feet and do 5 ankle circles to the right, then 5 to the left.

Leg-Lifts

Stand sideways behind your chair. Hold the back of the chair with your left hand and slowly lift your left leg. Keep your knee bent straight ahead at a 90 degree angle. Now lower your leg until it almost hits the ground, but slowly raise it up again. Repeat for a total of 10 times and then switch to the other side.

Forward Crawl

Stand next to your desk and do forward arm circles for one minute. Follow with backward arm circles for 30 seconds.

Back Crawl

Now do the opposite! Do backward arm circles for one minute. Follow with forward arm circles for 30 seconds.

Run in Place

Feeling sluggish? Time for a cardio boost! Set your timers and jog in place for one minute. If that's too difficult for some family members, march in place instead. After one minute, how do you feel? The next time you do it, shoot for two minutes. This is great for a homework break or for parents who feel exhausted after work and daily chores. Aerobic exercise gets blood pumping to your heart and brain as well. Cardio is good for the heart and mind!



SCHOOL TO HOME

WELLNESS – EVERY BITE COUNTS!

What's In Season? What Makes Sense?

In winter we see different kinds of fruits and vegetables in our supermarkets. Bushels of different varieties of apples and pears are replaced with oranges, tangerines and grapefruits. Sure, it's now possible to get practically any kind of produce from around the world delivered to supermarket shelves, but things you enjoy at other times of the year might be less fresh and abundant, and more expensive.

This is a good time to take your kids grocery shopping and teach them about some basic home economics. Frozen and canned fruits and vegetables are more economical at many times in the year and just as nutritious when packaged with limited additional sugar and salt. Get creative with your kids and think of ways to get more servings of fruits and vegetables each day. Blueberry pancakes, broccoli cheese soup, peach smoothies, ham and pineapple pizza... what else can you think of?

Here are some tips from My Plate and the Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics:

Make half your plate fruits and vegetables—on a budget

- Fresh, frozen, and canned fruits and vegetables are all smart choices. Look for sales and buy some of each to last until your next shopping trip.
- Choose frozen vegetables that do not have added fat, salt or sugars.
- Buy canned fruits packed in "100% juice" or water.
- Look for canned vegetables that say "No added salt." You can also rinse canned vegetables to reduce the sodium content.
- Buy fruit and vegetables in loose-pack plastic bags. You'll only need to pour out what you need; then immediately return what you don't use to the freezer.
- Look for frozen fruits as an option when fresh fruits are out of season. Choose frozen fruit without added sugars in the ingredients list. To help frozen fruit keep its shape, serve while it's still somewhat frozen. Frozen fruit bars make a nutritious snack, too.
- Choose frozen plain vegetables or those made with low-sodium sauces.

Benefits of Choosing Frozen

According to data from U.S. Cold Storage, frozen products often contain more nutrients than fresh foods. That's because produce destined for commercial freezing is harvested at the height of ripeness and nutritive value. It is taken directly to nearby freezing plants for immediate processing which preserves the nutrient content. Fresh foods, on the other hand, can lose vitamins and minerals while being transported in trucks and sitting on shelves. Buying frozen foods also helps reduce food waste.

Keep Canned Foods on Hand

To help ease the stress of meal planning and budgeting, it's smart to keep canned ingredients on hand. You can make a variety of healthy dishes faster and have dinner on the table in a fraction of the time. Beans of all types and colors

are a great high-protein staple for chilis, soups, burritos, dips and casseroles. Canned tomatoes are ideal for pasta sauces, soups and salsa. Canned tuna and salmon provide countless ideas for lunch and dinner. Canned peaches and pumpkin have you covered for desserts, no matter what's in season.

What's for Breakfast?

Start every day the whole-grain way

- Serve whole-grain versions of cereal, bread, or pancakes at breakfast.
- Whole grains with more fiber will help your kids feel fuller longer so they stay alert in school.
- Choose foods with "100% whole wheat" or "100% whole grains" on the label. Or check the ingredient list to see if the word "whole" is before the first ingredient listed (for example, whole-wheat flour). If it is, it's whole grain.



SCHOOL TO HOME

WELLNESS – EVERY MOVE COUNTS!

Strive for 60 a Day, Every Day

At school kids all strive for a common goal: Engaging in at least 60 minutes of physical activity a day. Both the CDC and the American Heart Association recommend this be moderate-to-vigorous activity. While some of these 60 minutes can be done at school, the rest are left for after-school time. How can you help? By encouraging your kids to be active, and by being active yourself.

What are the benefits of being physically active every day?

1. Regular physical activity keeps your heart healthy and strong. It also helps you build healthy muscles, bones and joints.
2. Physical activity is good for both your body and your mind! It can improve your mood, give you more energy during the day, and help you sleep better at night.
3. It is also a good way to help achieve and maintain a healthy body weight.

Help stress the importance of an active, healthy lifestyle at home. Physical activity should be as important to your daily routine as brushing your teeth, bathing and getting enough sleep.

Do some activities that get your heart pumping: March in place, jog in place, dance, play jump rope games with an “invisible jump rope” (use your imaginations!). If you’re able to go outside, you could just instruct students to run around the perimeter of the playground or field. As long as they’re moving and doing their personal best, every step counts!

Winter Boredom Busters

Feeling cooped up due to winter weather? Get creative and think of indoor activities that are active (like dancing) rather than passive (like sitting on the couch). Things like:

- “Sock skating” on the kitchen floor or in non-carpeted hallways
- “Wastebasket basketball” with balls made of crumpled newspaper tossed into a wastebasket, bucket or cardboard box

What else can your kids come up with? Gather recycled cardboard from paper towel and toilet paper holders, recycled yogurt tubs and aluminum cans and let them use their imaginations!

Dance Your Way to 60!

Time flies when you’re having fun. Think of ways to incorporate physical activity into indoor play time to keep everyone active. Here are some ideas to suggest to your kids:

Dance Solo: How long is a song? A minute? Two minutes? More? Make a guess. Then pick a favorite song to dance along with at home. Set a timer or look at a clock to check the start time and end time. How long did you dance? How many times would you have to dance to that song to add 5 minutes to your 60 a Day chart? How about 10 minutes?

Make It Social: Invite a friend over to dance. How many minutes can you clock together for your charts? Or try Zumba together by watching some videos from [Zumba Kids](#).

Family Activity: Intergenerational Dance

Here's a fun, easy-to-learn dance routine you can try with the whole family – grandparents included. This multicultural video shows people of all ages, from all over the world, doing the Sid Shuffle. Have your kids show you the moves as you dance along with the music "...and walk it out like Granny!" [Dance Video: Do the Sid Shuffle](#)

Remember to Track Your Minutes!

Use the charts here to track your activity "bursts" and bring them back to school. Or keep one chart at home and one at school. Pay attention to how you feel on days when you're less active vs. more active. When you've racked up 60 minutes of activity for several days in a row, how does that make you feel? How about an entire week?

Home to School Wellness Charts

FAMILY ACTIVITIES	Date(s)	Notes: Which ones did you try?
Relax and Unwind		
Desk Exercises		
Making a recipe with frozen, canned or fresh fruit or veg		
Dancing		
Other Physical Activity		

Physical Activity Chart

Students: Write the name of the activity type in each box. Tally your minutes and add them to your 60 a Day chart back at school.

Parents: We're including a couple extra ones here, in case you'd like to try it too. No need to return this one to school. Hang onto your copy for inspiration!

Name: _____							
PHYSICAL ACTIVITY	Mon	Tues	Wed	Thurs	Fri	Sat	Sun
10 minutes							
10 minutes							
10 minutes							
10 minutes							
10 minutes							
10 minutes							
Total							

Signatures

Student's signature _____

Parent/Guardian's signature _____

Teacher's signature _____



Family Copies (Keep at Home)

Name: _____

PHYSICAL ACTIVITY	Mon	Tues	Wed	Thurs	Fri	Sat	Sun
10 minutes							
10 minutes							
10 minutes							
10 minutes							
10 minutes							
10 minutes							
Total							

Name: _____

PHYSICAL ACTIVITY	Mon	Tues	Wed	Thurs	Fri	Sat	Sun
10 minutes							
10 minutes							
10 minutes							
10 minutes							
10 minutes							
10 minutes							
Total							



SCHOOL TO HOME SPRING

Family Connection Features:

- Managing Busy Spring Schedules
- Balance Exercises
- Make Half Your Plate Fruits & Veggies
- Eat the Rainbow
- After-Dinner Walk
- Spring Fun & Games

Put a spring in your step (but don't lose your balance!)

When did spring get so crazy-busy? Suddenly there are sports practices, school concerts, and all sorts of activities sending us in many different directions. Make the most of the extra daylight hours but take time to maintain as many regular family routines as possible to keep everyone on track. Below are some tips to help busy families relax, recharge and reconnect.



SCHOOL TO HOME

WELLNESS – EVERY PART COUNTS!

Focus on Family Meals

4 Tips for On-the-Go Family Meals

Here are some ideas to help you eat together when everyone's on-the-go!

1. Make eating together a family goal. Sometimes just setting a quantifiable and achievable goal helps make things happen! The vague feeling that, "We should eat together more," isn't really inspiring. A statement like, "Our family's goal is to eat together at least three times every week," gives you something much more solid to strive for.
2. Have dinner ready to go. If you only have 40 minutes between walking in the door and heading back out again, the only way to eat a meal together is if it's already cooked! Pull out that dusty crockpot and let dinner cook while you're away or prepare meals that can be made ahead of time and warmed-up like lasagna or quiche.
3. Keep it simple. The benefit of family meals comes from the shared time, not what's being served. Soups, sandwiches, "breakfast for dinner" or a store bought rotisserie chicken with a salad is just as effective as an elaborate dinner with all the trimmings.
4. Think outside the box. Again, the benefit comes from eating together. Dinner isn't the only meal that can be eaten as a family! If you're too busy in the evenings find time to share breakfast, lunch or brunch together during the week (Saturday or Sunday brunch is a wonderful family tradition!). If everyone is on the go maybe it's easier to meet at the soccer field for a picnic 30 minutes before practice starts instead of trying to get everyone home. Be creative!

For more ideas see this and other blog posts from Together Counts: [4 Tips for On-the-Go Family Meals](#)

Focus on Balance

With busy schedules, it's especially important to make time to slow down, calm the mind and restore a sense of balance at the end of the day. Encourage your children to practice some of these balance exercises and basic yoga poses. Why not make it a family activity and give them a try yourself!

Carry a Book on Your Head!

In your grandparents' day, young ladies were taught to improve their posture by walking while balancing a book on their heads. Now some yoga practitioners swear by it, too. In addition to your posture, it realigns the spine and releases tension from the neck and shoulders. Chronic back pain is a major problem in America, and with more people attached to computers and electronics, the problem is affecting young adults in their twenties and even teens. Help your child develop good posture and good habits for life!

For kids: When kids are feeling restless while waiting for dinner or need a break from homework, encourage them to do the "book on your head" walk. A hallway works well or they can walk in a square pattern around a room. Hardcover books work better than slippery paperbacks, but any type will do. Challenge them to see how long they can walk without dropping the book. It may take several tries and that's okay!

For parents: For anyone who works in an office, types at a keyboard or spends a lot of time driving or sitting, this is

a quick and effective way to strengthen your core and regain your balance. Try the 30-30 rule: Every 30 minutes, stand up from your desk, place a book on your head, and allow your spine to reset for 30 seconds. Close your eyes if you like. Sit down and continue your work for another 30 minutes.

If you find yourself slumping over the keyboard again, just grab the book and put it on your head while seated for 10 seconds. Notice how your spine shifts back so that your ears, heart and hips are aligned.

Outdoor Balance Games

Playgrounds are a perfect place for kids to incorporate balance activities into their free play time. With younger kids, you can model how to walk balance-beam style on a curb, putting one foot carefully in front of the other, heel to toe. Or play “don’t step on the cracks” when walking on a sidewalk. Hopscotch is another great game for developing balance and coordination. [Note: We can add the hopscotch instructions and diagram from the K-2 section here.]

Yoga Poses

Stork Stand

- Stand next to a chair. Place your hands on your hips, then stand on one leg.
- Position your other foot against the inside knee of your standing leg. Take a deep breath and see how long you can balance.
- Now switch legs.
- After a few successful stands, try it with eyes closed!

Tree Pose

- Stare at one object straight ahead in the distance to stay focused. Take a deep breath (inhale slowly in, exhale slowly out).
- Pretend you are a tree in a forest. Your feet will be roots, your legs will be trunks and your arms will be branches.
- Stand on your right leg, and imagine that leg is a tree trunk. Bring your left foot to rest on your “trunk,” above or below the knee. Raise and reach out your arms like tree branches.
- Focus on planting your roots (your standing foot) deep into the ground. Feel the sun on your face and hear the wind rustling through your leaves. Imagine birds, chipmunks and squirrels living in your branches.
- Do this pose on each leg. Is one easier than the other? Take equal turns standing on both to create balance.

Easier: Begin by leaning on a wall or chair for support. Or stand two feet from a wall, in case you need it for support.

Harder: Close your eyes and see if you can keep your balance without falling over. Pretend it’s a windy day and wave your arms (branches) gently in the wind. Hold hands with two or three other “trees” and make a forest!

Eagle Pose

Pretend you are an eagle.

- Fix your talons (feet) firmly on the ground.
- Breathe in and bend your knees.
- Breathe out and spread your wings (arms) out wide to both sides.
- Repeat as you soar through the sky!
- Now breathe in and bring your hands to your hips. Cross one leg over the other leg and try to hook your “talon” behind your calf. (Easier: Let your toes touch the ground.)
- How long can you stay in your perched position?
- Hold for as long as you can and then repeat with the other leg for balance.

Easier: Rest your back against a wall while doing this pose. Or do part one of the Eagle Pose (soar) only, but not part two (the perch).

Harder: Bring your arms out in front of you. Bend your elbows, cross one arm over the other and have your hands touch palm to palm. Now do the perch position with your legs.



SCHOOL TO HOME WELLNESS – EVERY BITE COUNTS!

April showers bring... rainbows of food in every color!

Farmer's markets and supermarket produce aisles are adding more and more variety as new crops are harvested at different times throughout the season. Depending on where you live, you'll likely find more local produce as fruits and vegetables become more abundant.

Here are some of the lessons we're teaching in school. Keep the colors flowing at home and ask kids what they've learned. Together, see what new varieties of produce you can discover!

Rainbow Foods 101

Fruits: All kinds count!

What kinds count? Any fruit or 100% fruit juice counts as part of the Fruit Group. Fruits may be fresh, canned, frozen, or dried, and may be whole, cut-up, or pureed. Eating the whole fruit is better than drinking just its juice. This is because fiber is lost during the juicing process. Learn more here: www.choosemyplate.gov/fruit

Vegetables: Who's in your group?

Veggies are divided into different subgroups — each with different types and amounts of vitamins and minerals. That's why it's important to mix things up! Learn more here: www.choosemyplate.gov/vegetables

Vegetable subgroups:

- Dark-green vegetables: Broccoli, kale, bok choy, and romaine lettuce
- Red and orange vegetables: Red peppers, tomatoes, sweet potatoes, pumpkins
- Beans and peas
- Starchy vegetables: Corn, potatoes

Variety is the spice of life! Eat a variety of:

- Vegetable subgroups
- Raw and cooked vegetables
- Colors of vegetables (eat the rainbow!)

Keep your eyes peeled for fruits and vegetables from each color group—for instance, red strawberries or peppers; orange tangerines or sweet potatoes; green grapes or broccoli; white pears, mushrooms or onions; purple plums, cabbage or olives.

See this Fruit and Veggie Color List for reference:

www.fruitsandveggiesmorematters.org/fruit-and-veggie-color-list

Color-of-the-Day Snacks

Try pairing fruit and veggie combos by color for fun. This is a good way for fruit-lovers to branch out and eat more vegetables. For instance, serve slices of red apple and red peppers, orange sections with baby carrots or baked sweet potato fries, green grapes with sugar snap peas, raw coconut and raw cauliflower, raisins with small wedges of raw purple cabbage.

Eat Your Greenies

Green vegetables are sometimes a hard sell with kids. But serve them raw and crunchy with a tasty dip and they're more likely to be sold! Try low-fat ranch dressing or make your own dip with plain yogurt, garlic salt and some dried herbs, and serve with a selection of raw vegetables like string beans, pea pods, zucchini and broccoli.

Rainbow Recipes and Multi-Colored Snacks

Rainbow of Peppers

Cut bell peppers into strips and have family members try each color.

- Red peppers
- Yellow peppers
- Orange peppers
- Green peppers
- Purple peppers (if available)

Rainbow Fruit Salad

This can provide hours of activity — from shopping and prepping to serving and cleanup — or just 15 minutes if you have all the ingredients on hand. Either way you'll end up with a colorful, tasty and nutrient-packed family treat.

Take a trip to a supermarket or local farmer's market and let kids choose a fruit from each color of the rainbow. Set a budget in advance so you all know how much you'd like to spend on each ingredient. Teach your kids how to check what's "in season" and remember that it's fine to supplement with canned or frozen.

Back home, have kids help wash, cut and prepare the fruit. For stone fruit, you can use a sharp knife to cut the fruit in half and take out the stone, and then let them cut the flesh part with a bread knife. Put them all together in a big bowl and let kids serve their creation to other family members.

- Red: strawberries, cherries, watermelon
- Orange/yellow: oranges, cantaloupe, mango, papaya
- Green: kiwifruit, green grapes, honeydew
- White: bananas, coconut, brown pears
- Blue/purple: blueberries, purple grapes, plums

Rainbow Stir-Fry

Try the same approach as above, but with veggies! Come up with your own creative combinations, using all the colors in the rainbow. Let kids help pick out the theme and the ingredients. If you're interested in international recipes, do some research and look for recipes with interesting ingredients.

- Red: red peppers, red kidney beans, cherry tomatoes
- Orange/yellow: carrots, orange peppers, yellow summer squash, sweet corn
- Green: leeks, green onions, broccoli, bok choy, green cabbage, Chinese cabbage, green beans, peas, sugar snap peas, snow peas, green peppers, spinach, zucchini
- White: white onions, fennel, cauliflower, water chestnuts, white corn
- Blue/purple: red onions, purple cabbage, Japanese eggplant, black beans

Quick Recipe: Mexican Rainbow Stir Fry

1 tablespoon olive or canola oil
1 white or yellow onion, chopped
1 clove garlic, minced or ½ teaspoon garlic powder
1 red pepper and 1 green pepper, chopped
2 zucchinis, sliced and quartered
2-3 ears of corn, kernels only
1 can of black beans
1 teaspoon cumin
½ teaspoon chili powder
½ teaspoon salt

- Heat oil in a wok or frying pan, add onion and garlic and stir-fry until soft. Add peppers next and stir-fry for one minute. Add zucchini next and stir-fry for another minute. Add corn and stir-fry for another minute. Now add the beans and seasoning and cook for one more minute.
- When you serve the meal, ask family members to identify veggies from each color of the rainbow!
- Optional: Add 1 ½ cups cooked chicken, chopped, plus ½ cup chicken stock when you add the black beans. Serve with cooked brown rice and shredded cheese. Garnish with black olives and green onions to add more color, and add another red veggie to the table with a bowl of salsa!

Super-Quick Recipe: Easy Green Stir-Fry

1 tablespoon olive or canola oil
2 leeks or a handful of green onions, sliced
Your choice of other veggies from the Green group: broccoli, bok choy, green cabbage, Chinese cabbage, green beans, peas, sugar snap peas, snow peas, green peppers, spinach, zucchini, etc.
1 tablespoon low-sodium soy sauce

- Heat oil in a wok or frying pan, add chopped green onions or leeks (or substitute a yellow/white/red onion) and stir-fry until soft. Then add your other ingredients, whichever ones you choose, one at a time.
- Start with veggies that take longer to cook (like broccoli and green beans) and leave ones like spinach until the end. Stir-fry veggies until cooked but still crunchy (no more than five minutes).
- Add 1 teaspoon of low-sodium soy sauce at the end and give a final stir. Serve with cooked brown rice and braised tofu or cooked chicken, meat or seafood on the side.



SCHOOL TO HOME

WELLNESS – EVERY MOVE COUNTS!

Catch the Baseball Season Spirit

What happens when you want to play but don't have enough people to form a team?

Play Catch

No gloves required! Simple instructions: Use a tennis ball or similar soft ball, match kids up into pairs or threesomes, and have them play catch. That's it!

Play Invisible Baseball

Don't have a ball or bat or time for a game? Play "invisible" baseball and act out the actions instead, mime style. Practice pitching and practice batting on your own, or gather a group for an "invisible" ball game.

Run the Bases

Don't have a bat or ball? Go outside and just run the bases. Don't have real bases? Use rocks or sweatshirts or whatever you can find to mark the spots. It's a great excuse to get outside in the fresh air.

After-Dinner Walk

Days are getting longer. Take advantage of the extra daylight hours by getting outside after dinner. Start a tradition like an AWD (after-dinner walk) and let kids bring scooters, skateboards or bikes if they like. Whether for 15 minutes or a half an hour, it's a nice way to get some extra fresh air and burn some more energy at the end of the day. Plus it's good for digesting your meal and getting you all ready for a good night's sleep.

Home to School Wellness Charts

FAMILY ACTIVITIES	Date(s)	Notes: Which ones did you try??
Balance Exercises		
Yoga Poses		
Rainbow Recipe		
After-Dinner Walk		
Other Physical Activity		
<i>Any recipes or activity ideas to share?</i>		

Signatures

Student's signature _____

Parent/Guardian's signature _____

Teacher's signature _____



SCHOOL TO HOME SUMMER

Stay Cool & Keep Active in the Heat

Did you know? Summer is the time when kids are most likely to gain excess weight. A national study of more than 18,000 school children found dramatic increases in body mass index (BMI) – a measure of weight relative to height – during summer vacations.

“The structured nature of the school day, with its scheduled exercise periods and limited opportunities to eat, helps students maintain a healthy BMI,” said study co-author Paul von Hippel, a health policy researcher at the University of Texas, Austin. Non-school environments, on the other hand, are more unstructured and unsupervised, and many children engage in sedentary activities and excessive snacking.

It's hard for parents to juggle work, child care and activities during the summer and with hot temperatures kids often prefer to cool down inside. Try to set some guidelines at the start of the summer to keep everyone mindful of screen time, healthy snacking and the need to stay active. Here are some tips to get you and your kids get into the summer swing.



SCHOOL TO HOME

WELLNESS – EVERY PART COUNTS!

What's the recommended amount of screen time?

- Children under 2: no screen time
- Children 2–5 years old: one hour per day
- Children 6 years and older: two hours per day

Easier said than done, especially in the summer! But if you're strict about the guidelines, kids will be forced to find other things to entertain themselves. Imagination is often ignited when kids are bored! The American Academy of Pediatrics says that digital media should never replace healthy activities — particularly sleep, social interaction and physical activity.

Make a list of non-electronic alternatives

Tired of hearing, "I'm bored"? Brainstorm a list of activities with your kids at the start of the summer and see how many they can tick off the list. Here are some ideas to get you thinking:

- Make cootie catchers
- Do arts and crafts
- Read books
- Doing puzzles
- Draw or doodle in a notebook
- Make no-bake cookies
- Make homemade popsicles
- Dance in your bedroom
- Play board games
- Learn to make origami
- Learn to weave a friendship bracelet
- Make something with clay
- Play Tic Tac Toe

Tips & Infographics

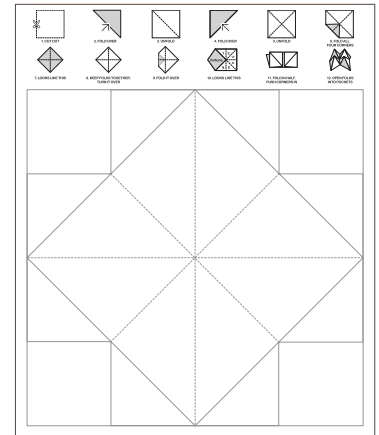
[Screen Time Vs. Lean Time](#)

[Screen Time Poster Printout](#) – to hang near home computer or TV or game console

Let's think of some ways you and the kids can take breaks from the screen and incorporate activity into tech time.

- **Take a Commercial Break:** Do your children like to watch TV after school or in the evening? Whenever an ad break comes on the TV, get everyone to jump up and exercise. The whole family can easily clock up 15 minutes during one hour of watching! Run in place, dance, do push-ups, planks or jumping jacks during each commercial. Encourage everyone in your family to do the same! Add up your physical activity during breaks and add it to your Calendar.

- **Blend Tech With Play:** Do you and the kids like video games? Try boxing, dancing, tennis or bowling games that get you in on the action! Games like Dance, Dance Revolution revolutionized the way we can play in physically active ways. Kids can do this on their own, with a family member, or invite a friend to join them for added fun.
- **Add a JAMmin' Minute to the Mix:** Have you been playing on the computer for a half hour? Jump up and do a JAMmin' Minute routine! Do four more and you can add 5 mins of physical activity to your Calendar. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=X6Uyru4fAoc>
- **Do a Family Jam:** Watch some of these JAMmin' Minute videos and learn the steps so you can all do them as a family. Have children be the leaders and call out the steps for family members to follow. How many minutes can you all clock together?
- **Make a Cootie Catcher or Wellness Wand:** See the printable template and instructions at the end of this letter.



Use the template on the next page to make your own cootie catcher, then choose some messages from the options below and write them in the blank spots.

Ccompliments / Positive Messages	You're so awesome you...	Conversation Starters
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> You are friendly. You are funny (in a good way) You are a hard worker. You are kind to animals. You are a good sport. You are strong. You are never mean. You are a rock star! 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Choosing not to smoke. Having a great smile. Being nice to new students. Could be President one day. Can do anything. Should write a book. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> What is your favorite...? Food? Subject/teacher? Type of music? Book? Animal? Sport?

Cootie Catcher

Family Connection: Home Activity Make a Wellness Wand

Materials for Lesson Plan:

- Yarn balls, a variety of colors
- String, ribbon or cello paper may also be used
- Craft sticks (or coffee stirrers or reed sticks will also do)
- Scissors

This is similar to Ojo de Dios, a traditional Mexican craft that's been a popular activity of American summer camps for many years. The simple process of making this craft – a gentle, repetitive winding motion – is as soothing as the colorful product. This requires fine-motor skills and coordination, so you hold your sticks in one hand while weaving with the other. Once you get the hang of it, we hope you'll find the activity satisfying and relaxing.

Instructions:

1. Cut a long piece of yarn, at least two arm's lengths.
2. Place one stick across the other in an X shape. Join them together by wrapping yarn around the middle where they intersect.
3. You can make a knot at one end of your yarn to start, or just tuck the end under the yarn as you wrap.
4. Do a few wraps in one direction, and then do a few wraps in the other direction to keep your sticks in place.
5. Once you get into the groove, it's easy! Keep going as long as you like.
6. You can switch colors of yarn or add different weaving methods as you go.
7. Tie a knot to secure your yarn when you're finished and leave enough of a "tail" to hang it in a window if you like.
8. Give one to a friend, teacher or neighbor to hang in their window. (That's good for your social health and for theirs as well!)

Note to Parents and Caregivers:

At school our children are learning about wellness. We now recognize that wellness is made up of three main parts: physical health, social health, and mental/emotional health. All of these parts are important – and interconnected!

The Wellness Wand craft project is one of the simpler activities we're doing in this unit. Why is it called a Wellness Wand? Because it has separate parts, all connected together. It's a way to remind us that our thoughts and feelings and relationships with people affect our physical health, and vice versa, and it's a fun craft to do when you're feeling bored or worried or over-acted because it helps you to focus and be calm. Psychologists refer to the groove one gets into while knitting and doing similar crafting activities as "flow" – that brief period of time when you are so absorbed by an activity that you forget any worries. Adults enjoy this type of activity just as much as kids!

Make a Wellness Wand



SCHOOL TO HOME

WELLNESS – EVERY BITE COUNTS!

Every Cup Counts Too!

Kids and adults should aim for 8 glasses of water a day, and more during hot weather or when playing sports and running around. Make water or milk the first choice of beverage in your house and read these tips to make healthy choices easy for kids:

Tips for getting kids to drink more water:

- Fill up pitchers of tap water and keep them in the fridge. Cold water is much tastier than lukewarm!
- Fill up ice-cube trays so you have a supply of ice on the ready.
- Fun cups and straws entice kids to drink. Stock up at the end of the season sales.
- Drink lots of water yourself. Make water the thirst-quencher of choice for the family.

Make Fruit Spritzers

Mix one cup of 100% fruit juice with one cup of sparkling seltzer water. You'll get the same fruity flavor but half the calories.

Make Slushies

Crush ice cubes by putting them in a zip-top bag and banging them with a rolling pin. Be sure to do this on a hard surface like your outdoor steps — and not on a countertop or kitchen floor that might get damaged! Keep banging gently at the end until the ice pieces are crushed into fine pieces. This will keep kids busy and make them “work for their snack”! Now fill a cup with crushed ice and pour fruit juice in. Have kids experiment with more than one type of fruit juice and see which combos they like best.

“Cool Down” Snacks

Did you know that more than half your body is made of water? We use up a lot whenever we run and play or race around doing chores, then we need put water back in bodies.

Along with drinking water and milk, there's another way we can add water to our bodies: By eating fruits and vegetables that are high in water! Which ones are the most hydrating?

1. Cucumbers are made of almost all water! (96%) Iceberg lettuce has just as much. So they are tied for first place.
2. Celery comes in second place. (95%)
3. Watermelon is very high in water, too! (92%) Strawberries have just as much. Green peppers, too! So watermelon, strawberries and green peppers are tied for third place.
4. Cantaloupe comes in fourth. (90%)
5. Oranges and pineapple come next, tied for fourth place. (87%)

Take an International (Food) Vacation!

You don't need to buy a plane ticket to sample foods from around the world. Summer is a great time to take a bus or train to a city neighborhood that specializes in a certain type of ethnic cuisine. You can also spend time in your local library finding recipes from different regions and then go see what you can find at your local farmer's market or store.

The following book, video and song are wonderful ways to open up the discussion and open students' eyes to the rich cultural diversity of foods and traditions in our country.

Book: [Everybody Cooks Rice](#) by Norah Dooley

A child is sent to find a younger brother at dinnertime and is introduced to a variety of cultures through encountering the many different ways rice is prepared at the different households visited.

Video: [Let's Eat Dinner | PBS Learning](#)

It's fun to try new foods with a friend! Follow our narrator as she tries traditional dinners with families from Kenya, Japan, and Lebanon. This animation teaches students about friends and foods from other world cultures, helping them recognize that diversity exists and that people differ in language, dress, food, and more!

Song: [Take Your Taste Buds on a World Tour](#)

Listen to this song about foods from around the world — falafel, gyros and more.

Make a list of foods you read or hear about, and then talk about which ones you'd like to try over the summer. More examples:

Snacks such as:

Hummus and pita bread (Middle East)

Quesadillas (Mexico)

World Fruits:

Pomegranate (Iran)

Kiwi (national fruit of China)

Mangoes (national fruit of India, Philippines and Pakistan)

Lychee (canned) – Japan



SCHOOL TO HOME

WELLNESS – EVERY MOVE COUNTS!

Keeping Active!

Healthy Eating

Whether you're planning for kids to be home with a caregiver while you work through the summer, maintaining the school year day care routine or you'll be staying home with the kiddos through vacation, summer vacation can be a great time to reinforce healthy eating choices.

1. Keep healthy food choices on hand and within reach for everyone in the family – precut fruits and veggies, a fruit bowl, small containers of nuts, whole grain crackers, low-fat cheese sticks, turkey rolls and more not only make easy self-serve snacks – they can also mix and match into a well-rounded meal to grab on the go.
2. Leave the work to your favorite local restaurants. Not only is eating out fun, but it's easy to find Healthy Dining and Kids LiveWell choices that everyone can be happy about... all without heating up the kitchen on a hot summer day.
3. Get kids involved with family meals and food. Task kids with planning, shopping for and cooking meals with your help for the week based on MyPlate recommendations (even restaurant meals!). Kids learn valuable skills and gain some control in meals while you, hopefully, get to spend more time on something you love.

Keep Moving

Summer is loaded with opportunities for kids and parents alike to move more, but it can also be easy to fall into a less-active lifestyle. Head off the urge to laze away the days or evenings with fun ideas like these from SuperKids Nutrition:

4. After every 30 minutes of chores, summer reading, or video games, take an activity break! Skip rope, do jumping jacks, or jog in place for 5 minutes to get your blood flowing.
5. Hop scotch: Make use of your driveway, sidewalk or nearby pavement at a park and draw a game of hop scotch – make it as big as you can for more hopping!
6. Have a water balloon toss! Fill up a bucket of water balloons and have your friends pair off into teams of two. Have each pair line up equal distance apart and toss the balloon to their teammate. Each time a teammate catches the balloon, he or she must take a step back to increase the distance between the players. Keep going until there is only one team left with an unbroken balloon!

Read more at:

[12 Tips to Keep Your Family Healthy This Summer](#) | Together Counts Blog

When you run out of ideas... Play tag!

Many generations of kids spent their childhood playing endless games of tag. How many types can you remember? How many types have your kids played? Make a running list. When you run out of variations, come up with some original ones of your own!

Tip: If kids get hot, put on a sprinkler if you have a yard. If not, keep a water station on hand with a cooler full of ice. If they ask for a popsicle break, allow it but make a rule that they need to play two more games of tag after. The point is to have fun, of course, but you also want to get your 60 minutes of physical activity accomplished at the same time.

- **Freeze Tag:** Players who are tagged are “frozen” and must stand in place like statues until they are unfrozen. Any “unfrozen” player can unfreeze them (by tagging them), and round and round it goes.
- **TV Tag:** The same rules as above, except the frozen player must also call out a TV show or movie or sports team (whichever category is chosen for the game) in order to be unfrozen. A show, movie or team name can only be used once.
- **Shadow Tag:** Rather than physically tagging players, the person who’s “it” tags others by stepping on their shadows. Easier said than done!
- **Team Tag:** Cops and Robbers, Manhunt and Sardines are all popular types of team tag. Search on the Internet for rules if you’d like to learn about one or all of these.
- **Pickle:** Also called Stolen Bases, this is a popular form of tag played with a tennis, kickball or other soft ball and two bases. (Rocks or trees make good bases, but anything will do.) Players take turns being runners or base guards. Two players guard the bases, one a piece, while the others run between them. Guards throw balls and try to “tag” the players with them. If players touch a base, they’re safe. If a runner is hit by the ball, he/she takes that guard’s place, and that guard becomes a runner.

Home to School Worksheets

None required! Relax, it’s summer! Enjoy yourselves and see you in the fall. :)