

May

Nutrition and learning...Is there a link?

The food choices children make can influence their health and learning ability. In Nova Scotia, grade 5 students who ate a healthy diet that included a **variety** of foods, with an **increased fruit and vegetable** intake and **lower caloric intake of fat** were more likely to pass reading and writing testsⁱ. Today, many children are eating too much fat, sugar and salt, and not enough vegetables, fruit and whole grains. This could be affecting how well they are doing in school. To help get your family on the road to healthy eating, try the following:

- Encourage children to choose most foods from the four food groups in [Canada's Food Guide](#).
- Children are influenced by their parents' eating habits and attitudes towards food – if they see you eating healthy foods, they will likely follow suit.
- Keep ready-to-eat, healthy foods on hand for the times when hunger strikes (e.g., fruit cups, yogurt, cheese strings).
- Involve children in planning meals, packing lunches and selecting snacks; use this as an opportunity to talk about healthy choices.
- Set 'nutrition ground rules' so children know what to expect. For example, everyone in the family eats breakfast, milk or fortified soy beverage is served with meals and after-school snacks come from two out of the four food groups.

A healthy lunch includes at least three of the four food groups from [Canada's Food Guide](#).

A healthy snack includes at least two of the four food groups from [Canada's Food Guide](#).

ⁱVeuglers PJ., et al., 2008. [Diet Quality and Academic Performance](#). Journal of School Health, 78(4): 209-215

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