

August 2006

The Health Advisor

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It is no surprise that healthy kids do better in school than unhealthy kids. The surprising news is that more and more kids these days are not considered healthy! Did you know that the number of overweight kids has tripled in the past 30 years? This is significant because overweight kids are at greater risk for developing health conditions such as diabetes, heart disease, some cancers and breathing problems like asthma. Being overweight may also contribute to social and emotional challenges, such as low self esteem, anxiety and stress.

Good eating habits and regular physical activity are two important parts of staying healthy and succeeding in school. Studies show a direct link between good nutrition and academic success. Kids who skip meals and fill up on high fat, high sugar foods have a harder time focusing in the classroom. With increasing pressure on schools and students to improve test scores and overall academic performance, it is more critical than ever for kids to stay healthy and ready to learn.

The whole community has a responsibility to promote healthy habits among children. Families and schools can be extremely influential in helping kids establish life-long eating habits that contribute to good health. In fact, many schools in the southwest Bronx are taking steps to establish "healthy snack policies" that guide children in making healthy food choices. Such policies strongly discourage students from bringing "junk food" to school for snacking or eating in place of a balanced meal. Some schools have distributed a "Recommended Snack List" to parents so that they are aware of healthier snack options and can talk to their kids about choosing appropriate snacks for school. Examples of snack items on the list include fruits, vegetables, low fat yogurt, baked chips (instead of fried), pretzels, granola bars, and low-fat milk. Some corner stores and bodegas are even doing their part to support schools' snack policies by agreeing to stock items included on the "Recommended Snack List." Children often buy snacks for school at nearby bodegas, so it is important that healthier options are available at these stores.

The new school year is just around the corner! Now is the time to think about how you can help your child have a successful, fun and healthy school year. Talk to your child about making healthy food choices and how it can help them do better in school! Speak to the principal or parent coordinator at your child's school about implementing a healthy snack policy! Ask the corner stores and bodegas to stock healthy snack options for your kids! To request a copy of the "Recommended Snack List" please call Geysil Arroyo at 718-588-1235.