

Nursing Needle

National School Breakfast Week is March 8-12. Breakfast is the most important meal of the day. The body needs fuel to restart the day. Students who eat breakfast do better in school, are more likely to participate in physical activities including recess, tend to eat healthier overall, and maintain a healthy weight over their lifetime. Those students who skip breakfast are less able to learn at school, get less iron which can lead to fatigue, and more likely to be overweight. These students tend to miss more class time as they experience more physical complaints, especially stomach pain, due to hunger. As parents we should be role models. We need to show our students healthy foods and offer those each morning. Taking time to sit and eat with our students ensure better learners.

Not just breakfast but overall nutrition becomes a major component in promoting growth and in preventing disease. What is eaten can affect different body systems and how that system functions. For example, eating large amounts of sweet foods can lead to tooth decay and the extra calories can lead to obesity. Drinking soda replaces milk which in turn decreases the amount of calcium that the body needs. The stimulant effect of soda can interfere with the ability of the body to get necessary sleep. It can produce nervousness, irritability, and even headaches, which all can interfere with learning. Good nutrition can provide the adequate amounts of vitamins and minerals and sufficient fiber. Add plenty of water and physical exercise and we have a commitment for lifetime of weight management and health. Physical exercise becomes a vital part of the equation as it can help to reduce the risk of early death from many causes and prevent weight gain. When combined with a healthy diet, physical exercise

helps promote weight loss and reduce abdominal obesity. It helps reduce depression, prevent falls, improve cognitive function, and improve bone density.

The USDA designed a Food Pyramid which provides advice on how to give children a healthy balanced diet. Each color of the pyramid represents a different food group. The stairs of the pyramid represents the importance of exercise where children need to get 30-60 minutes of moderate to vigorous exercise each day. Each recommendation varies based on age, gender, and exercise habits. Serving size and appetites vary and that is ok, so the most important point is to serve a variety of foods regularly. The orange stripe is for grains. Breads, cereals, rice and pasta are high in complex carbohydrates which give students energy to play, pay attention in class and do many other activities. Green is for vegetables. Vegetables provide vitamins and minerals needed for good health as well as fiber to aid in digestion. Fruit is the red stripe and is a good source for Vitamin C and A, Potassium and Fiber. Vitamin C helps the body to heal after getting a cut and works with your body's immune system to resist infection. Vitamin A helps build healthy eyes, skin and hair. Potassium keeps the muscles and nervous system working properly. Dairy foods like milk, yogurt and cheeses are on the blue stripe. These foods provide Vitamin A, Vitamin D, Calcium and Protein. Vitamin D helps the body absorb Calcium and utilize it to build healthy bones and teeth. Proteins help the body maintain and repair body tissues and build muscle. The purple stripe consists of meats, fish, beans and nuts that also provide proteins. The last stripe is yellow and it is for fats and oil. This category is to help to absorb vitamins A, E, D, K, and beta carotene. These substances but need to be limited due to high caloric content. Sugars are included here as they provide

quick energy, but again should be used in moderation. Extra intake of sugar is stored as fat and leads to obesity. For more information about the Food Pyramid visit www.mypyramid.gov.

Good nutrition, weight management, and exercise lowers the risk for developing heart disease, stroke, diabetes, and some types of cancer and osteoporosis. The lack of adequate nutrition affect the body's immune system and its response to fight disease. A decrease of nutrient's to the brain can decrease the ability to concentrate and affect overall learning potential.

March also brings National Poison Prevention Week the 20-26. This is a time for awareness of poisons that can hurt or even kill if you eat, drink, breathe, or get them in your eyes or on your skin. Thousands of children in Texas are accidentally poisoned each year by dangerous materials. Making sure children are not exposed to potentially toxic substances is the best way to prevent accidental poisonings. This week brings attention to the Poison Control Network Center and reminds all of us to secure poisonous substances, including medications, out of reach of children. To get more information about the Poison control Network, please visit www.poisoncontrol.org and if assistance is needed to answer questions concerning the possible toxicity of a product or medication, please call 1-800-222-1222. Pharmacists and nurses are there to help provide information on millions of substances and how to help.

Lets have a great Spring Break. Stay Happy and Healthy. Nurse Brandon