

Mealtime Memo

for Child Care

The Importance of Breakfast

Breakfast is when you “break-fast.” During the night, your body may be asleep but it is still consuming nutrients. So when you awake, you should replenish those vital nutrients by giving your body food that will help it grow and maintain its function. When children eat at child care facilities, provide all components of a breakfast meal which includes (for children two through five years) fluid skim or low-fat milk, vegetables, fruits, or portions of both and grains. Remember meat and meat alternates may be used to meet the entire grains requirements a maximum of three times a week. One ounce of meat and meat alternates is equal to one ounce equivalent of grains.



Plan for Breakfast

Most children will rest well at night and awake early in the morning to prepare for school. Some have enough time to eat breakfast at home, whereas others have to wait and eat at the child care center or home. Some may even eat a snack while on the way to the center. Eating on the go has its disadvantages. It gives you less time to consume food, and many snacks may lack vital nutrients. It is certainly more pleasurable to be able to sit down and enjoy your meal than trying to eat in a rush. Therefore, planning meals ahead is a good strategy to help save time in the morning and enjoy a delicious and nutritious breakfast.

Involve Children in Planning

Ask the children what breakfast foods they like. Smoothies are a great, kid-friendly option! You could offer different kinds of smoothies that are meal pattern compliant and allow the children to choose the ingredients they want. They can even be involved with making the smoothie. Under close adult supervision, let the children push the button to blend the food.



Approved Breakfast Cereals

Not all breakfast foods need to be cooked. Breakfast cereals include ready-to-eat cereals and instant and hot cereals. Remember to choose breakfast cereals that are low in added sugar. Breakfast cereals served to infants, children, and adults must contain no more than 6 grams of sugar per dry ounce (21.2 grams of sugar per 100 grams of dry cereal).



Have a Breakfast Bar

Having a breakfast bar is a good option and fun idea from time to time. While it takes a little more planning, the children will love the idea of having something new and special. At a minimum make sure you have all the CACFP breakfast requirements available for children to choose from for the bar. Allow children to walk through and put items on their plates. However, if they do better sitting, have them sit and slide or pass the plates to the person sitting next to them family-style. The breakfast bar could include foods they do not have often, as well as the option to make a smoothie with some of the foods they choose.

Teach Children About Spices

You could also consider teaching a lesson on different spices such as cinnamon, cloves, or nutmeg prior to making smoothies. Spices are very strong and would need to be tapered down for children to experience the taste of them. This could be done by adding it to another food like yogurt or applesauce. You can plan activities around the use of spices. Then, if they like any of them ask them to describe the taste.



Making Breakfast Big

Send a postcard to parents telling them about the special breakfast meal. Encourage them to have their children participate and include some key points on how breakfast helps the children learn throughout the day. Ask parents to reinforce those key points at home. Here are some you could share.

Why breakfast is important

- When you wake up in the morning, your body needs food for energy so you can learn and move around.
- Food provides energy to walk, play, and have fun.
- Food helps the brain think, be alert, and make decisions.
- Choose foods that are nutritious and helps the body to grow.

Great Smoothie Recipe

Snack | Breakfast #CACFPCreditable:
Serves 8 ages 1-5

Snack #CACFPCreditable:
Serves 4 Adults

Peach, Pineapple, Orange Smoothie

2 cups yogurt, peach
1 1/2 cups pineapple juice
23.5 oz. jar mandarin oranges,
in 100% juice

Open mandarin oranges, pour into a freezer-safe pan with juice so oranges are in a single layer, and freeze. Once frozen, remove and add with all ingredients to a blender, mix on high until smooth. Serve immediately as a frosty smoothie or let sit for five minutes before serving.

References

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United States Department of Agriculture. Food and Nutrition Service. (08/04/2017). *Discover MyPlate: nutrition education for kindergarten*. Retrieved from <https://www.fns.usda.gov/tn/discover-myplate-nutrition-education-kindergarten#anchor1>

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