

August 2008

Dear Colleagues,

Greetings and welcome to the back-to-school issue of *It's All About Balance: Eat Smart, Play Hard, Rest Well*. As families start shopping for school clothes and supplies, our media release celebrates the many ways that Montana schools are helping students become **Fit, Healthy, and Ready to Succeed**. We are honored to have Montana's First Lady, Nancy Schweitzer, share her thoughts on how families can help make the connection between healthy children and academic success. Our handouts focus on the importance of **Nutrient-Rich Foods** and **Fun Fitness for Successful Kids**, while our delicious recipe-of-the-month is all about how to **Design A Wrap** - perfect for lunch boxes, as well as breakfast and dinner.

In the two years since Congress mandated local wellness policies for all districts with Child Nutrition programs, Montana schools have been successful in creating effective policies and implementing programs to enhance nutrition, fitness, and academic success. With excellent materials developed by Montana Team Nutrition and the Office of Public Instruction (OPI), Montana continues to be recognized nationally as a leader in school nutrition and wellness efforts. Many resource are available online; such as, a complete guide, Montana School Wellness in Action! is at [www.opi.mt.gov/pdf/schoolfood/SWellnessImpGuide.pdf](http://www.opi.mt.gov/pdf/schoolfood/SWellnessImpGuide.pdf)

On the fitness side, 5,326 students (254 teams from Anaconda to Wolf Point) participated in **Big Sky Fit Kids** ([www.bigskyfitkids.org/](http://www.bigskyfitkids.org/)), a 3-month program to increase physical activity. Fifty-two Montana schools (10,990 kids) signed up for Fit Kids Day during May. Billings has the first completed Safe Routes to School project in Montana. Finished in 2007, a continuous paved path - uninterrupted by vehicular traffic - allows neighborhood children to walk or bike to Arrowhead School. On October 8, 2008, schools throughout Big Sky country will again celebrate **Walk-to-School Day** ([www.walktoschool.org/](http://www.walktoschool.org/)).

We welcome your comments and suggestions about **Healthy Families 2008**. Just send your thoughts along to me at [EatRightMT2000@gmail.com](mailto:EatRightMT2000@gmail.com) - and remember: Past issues of **Healthy Families** and other ERM materials are available at [www.eatrightmontana.org/](http://www.eatrightmontana.org/) (check out our 2006 archives - all about how to eat local, play local, and live healthy).

*Dayle Hayes, MS, RD*

**Healthy Families** packets are made possible with generous support from agencies, organizations, and individuals. Please join us in thanking the 2008 sponsors listed on the right. If you use this packet and can make a donation to support positive, practical messages for families, please contact ERM Chair Katie Bark at 406-994-5641 or [kbark@mt.gov](mailto:kbark@mt.gov)

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## Back-to-school with Fun Fitness for Successful Kids

There is no doubt that physical activity is good for children's bodies. Regular activity - at least 60 minutes a day - helps children grow strong, stay well, and maintain a healthy weight. There is mounting evidence that moderate to vigorous physical activity helps children's brains too! Research from several different angles has confirmed that being physically active primes the pump for learning - as measured by critical thinking skills, grade point averages, and standardized test scores. **Bottom line:** Getting your kids off the couch and away from the TV and video games will definitely help them be healthier. Getting up and moving may also help them be more successful at school.

### Physical education (PE)

For healthy lifestyles, children need both free play and specific instruction on new physical skills. The ideal place for PE is as part of the regular school day - taught by qualified PE teachers - for at least 30 minutes every day. In addition to supporting daily PE in schools, families can take advantage of quality instruction in the community, like swimming or dance lessons. Quality physical education should be age-appropriate, fun, and continuously active for all students.

### Exploratory play

The American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP) believes active play is so essential for kids that they published a ten-page paper on getting families to play together more. According to AAP, play helps children mentally, physically, socially, and emotionally. All you have to do is turn off the TV and go explore the yard, the neighborhood, the playground, or the park. Explore on your feet, on a bike, or in a canoe. Splash in a stream, tumble in the leaves, or do somersaults in the grass.

### Organized activities

Active play can be organized - by adults or children. Think about all the "old-fashioned" activities that families enjoyed before everyone was glued to their favorite form of screen entertainment. There are active indoor games such as Simon Says or Twister®. There are dozens of games to play outdoors - from hopscotch, jump rope, and dodgeball to Frisbee® golf (or folf), badminton, and volleyball. You can also organize trips to the bowling alley, skating rink, or swimming pool.

### Competitive athletics

Team sports also provide opportunities for physical activity - so long as kids actually get to play sports that they enjoy. Sign your children up for sports that they want to play - rather than the ones you played (or wished you had played) as a child. Different children excel at and enjoy different types of activities; some do not enjoy competitive sports at all. Attend practices regularly to make certain that all children are getting equal chances to play - rather than just sitting on the bench.

**Looking for a simple way to fit FITNESS into children's busy days?** Establish walking (or biking) to and from school as the normal mode of transportation. Children will get all the physical and mental benefits of being physically active - and you'll save on those very expensive gas tank fill-ups! Walk or bike with your children when you can; organize a neighborhood walking school bus or bike-pool for the days when you are not able to go with them. Find out how to get involved in safe routes to school in your community at [www.walktoschool.org/](http://www.walktoschool.org/) and [www.saferoutesinfo.org/](http://www.saferoutesinfo.org/)

## Back-to-school with Nutrient-Rich Foods for Successful Kids

Want to raise happy, healthy, and successful children? Young children need the right fuel for growing, learning, and developing. This means foods and beverage with plenty of nutrients (protein, fiber, vitamins, minerals, etc.) and not too many calories, fats, or sugars. The secret to feeding a healthy family is to serve delicious nutrient-rich foods at every meal and snack. When children fill up on the right stuff - high quality nutrition for their bodies and brains, they will naturally have less room for the nutrient-poor choices (soft drinks, chips, candy, and desserts). Here are some quick, easy ways to serve children high-octane choices from every food group - morning, noon, and night.

### **Whole grain foods** with carbohydrates, fiber, B-vitamins, and more

Since the 2005 *Dietary Guidelines for Americans* focused on the nutritional benefits of whole grains, there has been an explosion of new options on grocery shelves. The key is to choose products that list whole grains as the first ingredient or two on the label. There are whole grain cereals for breakfast, the kid-friendly, “white” whole wheat bread for lunchtime sandwiches, crunchy whole grain crackers for snacks, and lots of truly delicious whole grain pastas for dinner.

### **Fruits and vegetables** with antioxidants, vitamins A and C, potassium, and fiber

You can't go wrong with produce, especially with fresh items from local farms. All types of fruits and veggies count - fresh, frozen, canned, dried, and 100% juice - and eating more of them matters, for kids and adults. At breakfast, enjoy fresh or frozen berries on cereal, slices of melon, or a glass of 100% OJ; at lunch, go with crunchy baby carrots or sliced apples; for dinner, make brightly colored veggies (broccoli, corn, sliced peppers, or frozen peas) the center of every plate.

### **Low-fat dairy foods** with protein, calcium, potassium, magnesium, and phosphorus

The nutrients in this group are biggies for kids - and, sadly, most young people in America are not getting enough calcium or potassium. Fortunately, it's easy to get the 3-A-Day dairy servings that children and teens need. It's as easy as an 8-ounce glass of milk with breakfast, lunch, and dinner. It's as easy as yogurt parfaits for breakfast or after-school snacks. It's as easy as string cheese for on-the-go energy anytime of day. When it comes to nutrient-rich dairy food, it's just easy!

### **Lean meat, poultry, fish, eggs, beans and nuts** with protein, iron, zinc, and B-vitamins

Whether you are talking growing muscles or active brains, these nutrients top the list for all children. Getting enough protein at every meal and snack helps with extending satiety (feeling comfortably satisfied after eating). While most kids get plenty of protein foods at lunch and dinner, breakfasts and snacks can be a bit skimpy on protein. At breakfast, try eggs, sliced deli meats, bean burritos, or last night's leftovers. Great snack proteins include nuts, jerky, and more leftovers.

**Want information about getting children to eat more NUTRIENT-RICH FOODS?** Getting smart foods onto children's plates and into their mouths really is easier than we sometimes think. At [www.mypyramid.gov/](http://www.mypyramid.gov/), you can listen to podcasts about simple steps toward healthier eating, explore inside *MyPyramid* to find out how to get more nutrition for your calories, and go to *MyPyramid for Kids* with games, coloring sheets, and lots of helpful family tips.

# For Immediate Release



**EAT RIGHT MONTANA**

*A coalition promoting healthy eating and active lifestyles*

[www.eatrightmontana.org](http://www.eatrightmontana.org)

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**MT Department of Public Health & Human Services**

August 1, 2008

## Back-to-School: Fit, Healthy, and Ready to Succeed

Montana's First Lady, Nancy Schweitzer, is a well-known champion for education in Big Sky country. With her husband, Governor Brian Schweitzer, she has launched an exciting Math and Science Initiative to prepare Montana students to be leaders in the global economy. With her commitment to Montana's great teachers and innovative classroom activities, Mrs. Schweitzer also understands that healthy lifestyle habits have a major impact on children's success at school.

"We know that kids can't learn as well if they don't eat a healthy diet and exercise regularly," says Nancy Schweitzer, First Lady of Montana and mother of three. "I frequently join students for lunch in the cafeteria so I know that many school food programs are working hard to provide healthy meals. Montana has also been a leader in "recess before lunch" programs in schools. This is a great policy, since research shows that students tend to make healthier eating decisions if recess comes before lunch. Other schools are serving a smart morning snack like fruit, cheese, and whole grain foods."

Since 2006, when Congress mandated local school wellness policies, many Montana districts have developed impressive programs to enhance the nutrition and fitness of students and staff with support from the Office of Public Instruction (OPI) and Montana Team Nutrition. For example, schools in Billings, Box Elder, Bozeman, and Lolo received awards in USDA's HealthierUS School Challenge; Bozeman and Laurel districts received state Worksite Wellness awards; Missoula and St. Regis serve breakfast in the classroom; and communities across the state are creating Farm-to-School coalitions.

However, when it comes to kids' nutrition and physical activity, schools are just one factor. Healthy habits start - and are reinforced - at home. Here are Mrs. Schweitzer's thoughts on simple ways that families can help kids eat smart and get fit:

- **Try it, you'll like it:** Kids don't always know that healthy food tastes good until they try it. Making healthy options fun, like "ants on a log" (celery, peanut butter or light cream cheese, and raisins) is another easy way to add nutrition.
- **Enjoy family meals:** Eating dinner is an important time for families to visit and for kids to share what they learned in school. An even better option is to cook the meal together.
- **Cook and learn:** There are lots of ways for families to integrate math and science in the kitchen, like learning how yeast works in baking bread. And a lot of math goes into cooking too, like using measuring cups and doubling a recipe.
- **Play together:** Take a family walk after supper or in the morning to start your day. Incorporate fun exercise, count how many steps are around your house, measure your stride and multiply.

Nancy Schweitzer sees lots of healthy opportunities for schools and families in the Treasure State. "Many Montana schools are able to buy food locally and fully prepare meals in the school kitchen which is a great wellness practice. Knowing what is in food and where it comes from can lead to healthy eating. Taking advantage of local and state parks to explore is another way Montana families can insure their children are fit, healthy, and ready to succeed."

Past and current issues of Eat Right Montana's monthly packets can be downloaded for free at

[www.eatrightmontana.org/eatrightthehealthyfamilies.htm](http://www.eatrightmontana.org/eatrightthehealthyfamilies.htm)

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## Design a WRAP

Delicious for breakfast, lunch, or dinner

### Directions

- 1) Choose one of the items in the wrap list as the shell. Get ready to load it with delicious, good-for-you foods!
- 2) Next, choose 1 or more condiments and spread on one-half of the grain.
- 3) Decide which protein appeals to you and place it on top of the condiment.
- 4) Choose a cheese, exploring low-fat versions of this calcium-rich treat.
- 5) Now, the fun! Load your wrap with delicious veggies and whatever else sounds good to you.
- 6) Fold your wrap up like a burrito, sit down, relax, and ENJOY!

### WRAP

- Tortilla (whole wheat, corn, flour, red pepper, or spinach)
- Pita bread (or other soft, flat bread)
- Large lettuce leaf

### CONDIMENT

- Low-fat mayonnaise or salad dressing
- Mustard
- Pickle relish
- Olive oil and vinegar
- Low-fat cream cheese
- Salsa
- Hummus
- Cranberry sauce
- Jam, jelly, or fruit spread

### PROTEIN

- Beef (sliced roast or cooked ground)
- Turkey or chicken (sliced or salad)
- Tuna or salmon (canned or salad)
- Any leftover meat, poultry, or fish
- Egg (sliced hard boiled or salad)
- Beans or tofu slices
- Peanut butter

### CHEESE

- Cheddar, Swiss, Colby, Provolone, Monterrey Jack, or American
- Crumbled feta, blue, or gorgonzola
- Fresh or grated mozzarella
- Grated Parmesan or Romano

### VEGGIES (sliced or grated)

- Lettuce, cabbage, spinach, mushrooms, peppers, carrots, celery, tomatoes, onions, avocados, or cucumbers
- Cole slaw or other prepared salads

### OTHER

- Pickles, pickled veggies, or jalapeños
- Thinly sliced apples or pears
- Sunflower seeds or crushed nuts
- Sprinkled herbs and spices
- Ground flax seeds