

From our August, 2011 Newsletter

KEEP YOUR KIDS HEALTHY IN SCHOOL

A recent column in the LA Times suggested in a tongue-in-cheek manner that schools can present minefields of health issues for kids: lousy cafeteria food, no running at recess, the stress of curriculum demands, germ incubation, messing with internal body clocks (particularly for teenagers)! So, apart from home schooling, what's a parent to do? Here are a few thoughts on how to keep your child healthy in school:



Ensure your kids engage in physical activity even though they are now in class most of the day. Walking to school, if possible, is a great way to start. Be vigilant to see that "no recess" is never a punishment used at your child's school. Make sure your child's school is a more active place, with appropriate physical education options. See to it that there's after school time for kids to be physical, be it shooting "hoops" in the driveway, a family bike ride after dinner, or even being silly with hula hoops. And don't forget to check out our [Fitness Fundamentals](#) program, where our PTs work with students to address the "couch potato" culture, as well as to prepare students in the skills necessary to achieve recognition in the Presidents Challenge.

Remember that heavy backpacks are never a good idea for young bodies. Teach your child to always use both straps of their backpack. Consider purchasing an extra set of books for home use so your child isn't lugging heavy books back and forth each day. A rolling backpack can be a great idea for a physically small child. And get your kids into the habit of cleaning their backpacks of excess materials at least once a week. There's no need to carry September's quizzes around in April!

More than 30 million kids eat school lunches in close to 100,000 public schools across the country on a typical day. Though the better-school-lunch movement has gained a toehold in many schools, offering kids salads and whole grains and fresh fruits, there's still way many unhealthy options in too many schools. Since we can't always control what our kids eat in school, encouraging them to make healthy choices is always a good idea. If you're a gardener, agitate for a school garden and nutrition education as a way to get kids pumped about eating well. Try to also be certain that they go to school each day having had a good breakfast (and remember that leftovers from dinner can be great breakfast choices for kids). Have cut-up fruits and veggies waiting for grabbing as after-school snacks when kids get home, or when they come to dinner famished. And don't forget the great tip seen recently on our Facebook site about the usefulness of sneaking pureed veggies into their foods to up their vegetable servings and decrease their overall calorie content!

Schools can be gigantic germ incubators. Be sure your kids know - and practice - the basics of hand washing. Kids can best withstand the onslaught of germs by getting enough sleep, eating a healthful and varied diet and getting all their recommended vaccinations, including the yearly vaccination for influenza.

And don't forget about [yoga](#) for kids as a way to improve concentration and attention, reduce stress, improve sleep, and reduce anxiety!

