



Solano Family & Children's Services, Child Care Food Program

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Nutrition Nuggets

Easing Back to School Anxieties in Children

Back to school season can be an exciting yet stressful time for families everywhere. Children are especially susceptible to anxiety and worry as they shift back to a structured routine following a relaxed summer. This year in particular poses its own unique challenges as parents prepare kids to return to school amidst the global pandemic. This guide is meant to provide tips and tricks to help ease your kids' anxiety as they transition back to school in a variety of classroom settings.

Practice your routine beforehand- Going back to a school routine can be difficult after a laid back summer. It's a good idea to get your child back into the school day routine a few days before school begins, even a week prior if you're able. This includes waking up on time, eating at scheduled times, and going to bed at regular times.

Communicate openly, offering empathy and support- Make sure to communicate that it's okay and completely normal to feel anxious and overwhelmed. Checking in on your kids' mental health can become a regular part of your parenting routine and will help the transition back to school.

Be mindful of expressing your own anxieties- Findings suggest that a parent externalizing anxiety symptom can greatly affect pediatric mental health, so it's important to be aware of your own anxiety levels and try to keep them under control. The calmer and more positive you are about school, the better it will be for your child's mental health.

Teach simple, effective coping strategies- In some cases, simple coping strategies can help children manage difficult situations and make anxiety less overwhelming. Some child friendly strategies include breathing exercises, journaling, and calming visualizations.

Talk about what the school days are going to look like- Discuss with them the protective measures that are put into place, and how their school setting may look a bit different this year. If your child is anxious about wearing a mask to school, go shopping for a few masks and let them pick out ones they like. You can also make masks together, allowing your child to get creative with fun patterns or fabrics.

Remind them of the importance of social distancing and hygiene habits- Kids may be lax about keeping a safe social distance between their friends and peers. To combat this, gently remind them of why social distancing is so important, and practice proper handwashing techniques at home.

Focus on the positive. While it's important to prepare kids for the changes that come along with new protective measures, it's also crucial to remind them of what they like school in the first place. Talk to your kids about the things they enjoy most about school, and remind them of those things often, helping them to feel more excited and encouraged about returning to the classroom.

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Veggie & Cheese Bagel

½ block of cream cheese
Tomatoes
Avocado
1 Whole Everything Bagel
1 Slice of Muenster and Cheddar Cheese

2 whole green onions
Cucumbers
Red Onion
Alfalfa Sprouts
Lettuce



Place ½ a block of cream cheese on a plate and mash it a bit with a fork. Next, chop up 2-3 green onions and mix them with the cream cheese until thoroughly combined. Slice all veggies thinly. Slice bagel in half. Spread the cream cheese generously on both sides of the bagel. Layer the vegetables. First lay the avocados right along the cream cheese to help them stay put. Next the alfalfa sprouts and then one slice of each kind of cheese. On the other half of the bagel arrange the cucumber slices in a circle. Sprinkle the cucumbers with a pinch of salt if you would like. Next lay the onion slices on top of the cucumbers, then the tomatoes, followed by a slice of lettuce.

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Healthy Back to School Grocery Shopping Tips

Shop the perimeter- The perimeter of the store is where fresh food is found produce, dairy, meat, and fish. Be sure to look for items that have only one ingredient and choose organic as much as possible to minimize exposure to harmful chemicals. Whole, fresh fruit is always quick and easy.

Read the labels- Nutritional labels reveal a lot. The main thing to avoid, of course, is sugar. It's in most kids' foods in various forms. Good bread topped with nut butter, avocado, honey, organic butter, veggies, or fresh fruit makes a better snack than packaged bars. Take time to learn which labels really mean something and read all the ingredients on the label.

Consider value, not just price- There are some products that are expensive for good reason, like quality fats and superfoods. Things like hempseed, nuts, and nut butters, matcha, chia seeds, nut oils, flaxseed and dried berries are so easy to use and pack a ton of nutrition into every bite, important for kid-size portions, while bumping up flavor, color, and texture.

Remember to teach as you go- Kids are never too young to start learning how to make healthy decisions. Be sure to involve your kids in the shopping trip, starting with the grocery list. Lay out ground rules ahead of time and make it a game. Explain why some foods are healthier than others. Show your kids how to read labels. Once your children learn to enjoy the process of choosing, preparing, and eating good food, good health is the natural result.



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