

Welcome! This newsletter is for families and is offered to you by The Fourth R program. The Fourth R is a healthy relationship curriculum that your child receives at school. The goal of the newsletters is to provide practical and usable information, resources, and strategies related to health education that aligns with what your child is currently learning in class.



## The Fourth R Program – Healthy Relationships, Safe Choices, Connected Youth

The Fourth R promotes healthy relationship skills and reduces risk behaviors

Your child's health class consists of four units of study. This newsletter is related to the fourth unit of study: **Healthy Eating.**

What is your child learning in health class?

- Eating healthy and staying active
- Evaluating food choices and food guides
- Goal setting for healthy eating and active living
- Making the connection between food choices and physical and mental health
- Media influences on eating and exercise



Parent involvement matters

Healthy eating and staying active starts at home. The way parents talk about food, cook meals, eat, and prioritize personal activity are a few of the most important influences in developing healthy eating and activity choices among youth. When it comes to eating, parents' attitudes about food can influence children's decisions around healthy or unhealthy options. As role models, parents need to make sure they're demonstrating a healthy attitude toward food so their children do, too.

Although cooking and grocery shopping may be considered adult responsibilities, including your child in decisions around meal planning is important. Keep a copy of Choose My Plate in the kitchen and teach your child about healthy choices the family can consider at each meal. When out grocery shopping, help your child understand why a particular food item may not be the best choice by being specific about what to look for when making food options. Choose foods from all four food groups, and strive to select fruits and vegetables of all colors.

Emotions play a big role in determining our eating habits. We don't always eat simply to satisfy hunger. Using food from time to time as a pick me up, a reward, or to celebrate isn't necessarily a bad thing. But when eating is your primary emotional coping mechanism, you can get stuck in an unhealthy cycle where the real feeling or problem is never addressed. Help your child identify their emotional eating triggers such as stress, feeling nervous, boredom, or social influences like friends.



**Parent To-Do:** Have a discussion with your child about setting healthier food and activity goals for the family. How can you make a favorite meal healthier? Decide on a family activity plan that you can do together one night a week.

## How can I help my child form healthy eating habits?

**Model healthy eating:** Always maintain a healthy attitude toward food. Enjoy what you eat and let your kids know it's okay to eat all foods in moderation.

**Talk about healthy eating habits at mealtime:** The most convenient time to talk about healthy eating is sometimes at the dinner table. Use the time together to discuss what foods everyone ate that day and how everyone can make better choices.

**Find a realistic balance:** It is best to avoid restricting foods or labeling foods as good or bad. Restricting foods can actually increase your child's desires for these foods when you are not there to restrict them. Find a healthy balance where healthy options are offered and consumed most of the time.

### Did you know?

Water is a critical nutrient for our bodies and is needed for almost every function of the body.

80% of our blood is made of water

50-75% of our bodies are made of water

### Did you know?

Emotions can contribute to our food choices. Recognizing your thoughts and emotions prior to eating can help you make better choices. Think about how you feel before and after eating something to become more aware of how your emotions affect your food choices.

## How can parents help?

Parents have a chance to ....

**Get their child off to a good start.** Make sure your child has time for breakfast at home each day. Kids who skip breakfast will say they are 'not hungry in the morning' but skipping the most important meal of the day can lead to learning and health problems. Help your child develop an appetite by providing light small meals at a time.

**Look for everyday opportunities to discuss positive approaches to food and physical activity.** Talk to your child often about ways everyone in the family can stay healthy in terms of eating choices and what kinds of physical activity they do.

**Make meals matter.** Although it may not be realistic of today's busy families to eat all their meals together, that doesn't mean it isn't a goal we should continue to strive for. Research shows that having family meals together has many benefits for both parents and children. Commit to at least one meal a day or several a week where all members of the family can eat together.

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