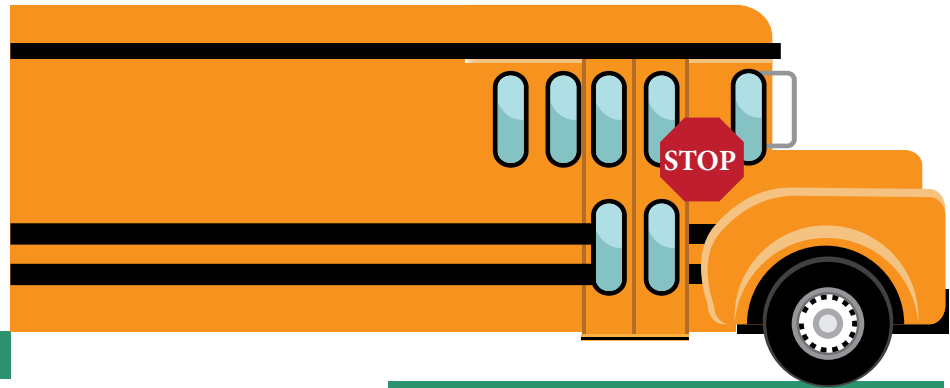


HEALTHY HABITS

August 2017



Back to School

It is time for back to school and whether school makes you jump with joy or wilt with exhaustion, it is definitely a shift in routine from summer. The end of summer break is coming to a close and school is on the horizon. If you haven't started thinking about or taking action to prep your kids (and yourself) for back to school, well now is the time! Here are a few tips to help you and your children with the transition

Get back into the bedtime routine by starting a couple weeks early and adjusting bed and wake times a little by little. By starting early you can alleviate some of the nightly drama of sudden changes and make the transition seamless. Here are some helpful tips.

Healthy Inspiration

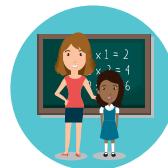
Every morning you wake up is another chance to get it right.

Did You Know

The average office desk has 400 times more bacteria than a toilet.



Consider investing in a visual timer if you have children who have a poor grasp of time. Practicing using the visual timer with a slow to start child can help get them out the door on time.



Meet the teacher before school starts to help alleviate any stress or worry of little ones to help the relationship start off on a good note.



Make a screen time plan for once school starts as there is homework to fit in first and then limit the amount of time they get for multimedia use.



Start moving bedtime back if it's crept later and later with the longer summer days. Sleep is absolutely critical for learning, and it is easier if they get used to the earlier hours now than trying to pry them out of bed on the first day back to school.



Decide if you want to teach any new chores prior to the beginning of the school year. Work on routines, which can include bathroom cleaning, animal care in and unloading dishes in our house. Get it nailed down now before you add in the stresses of school.



Support organization by letting your child pick out their clothes for the next day the night before and discuss what they would like for lunch the next day.

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Preparing your Fruits & Vegetables for Winter

As we approach harvest time this is when you should gather the supplies needed to determine what is needed to prepare the items for processing to continue enjoying through the winter. First decide what you would like to achieve and what you will need to complete your goal. By canning or freezing your vegetables you can turn your garden harvests into delicious off season meals packed with summer flavors.



Freezing vs. Canning

Freezing vegetables is a fast and easy form of food preservation, and most crops, such as asparagus, broccoli, green beans, peppers, summer squash, dark leafy greens, tomato and all types of juicy berries, will actually be preserved best if frozen. Part of the beauty of freezing vegetables is that you can easily do it either in small batches — thus making good use of odds and ends from your garden — or in one big batch of your homegrown harvest or peak-season.

Unlike canning, you do not have to pay attention to acidity or salt when freezing vegetables. Instead, you can mix and match veggies based on pleasing colors and you can include blanched mild onions in your frozen combos but don't include garlic, black pepper or other "seed spices," which can undergo unwanted flavor changes when frozen.

Start with fruits and vegetables of high quality. Before preparing vegetables for freezing, assemble the containers you will use. The selection of containers depends on the vegetable being frozen, personal preference and the types that are readily available. Containers should be moisture-vapor resistant, durable, easy to seal and should not become brittle at low temperatures. Containers suitable for freezing vegetables include plastic freezer containers, flexible freezer bags and their protective cardboard cartons, or glass canning jars. Foods packed in wide-mouth jars are easier to remove than those packed in narrow-mouth jars. Some household containers are not recommended for freezing. The cardboard cartons that milk, ice cream or cottage cheese come in are not moisture-vapor resistant enough. Regular jars break too easily at freezer temperatures. Wash vegetables thoroughly in cold water and prepare for blanching by looking up the information on length of time needed to properly blanch the vegetable you are going to freeze.

According to the National Center for Home Food Preservation (NCHFP), fruits and vegetables will last in the freezer for eight to 12 months if prepared and stored properly. Vacuum-seal bags cost more than regular freezer bags, but devotees say they are worth the extra expense because they make frozen foods last even longer. The original flavor, color, texture and nutritive value is usually retained during freezing than when these foods are preserved in any other way.

Blanching

Blanching is the process of heating vegetables with boiling water or steam for a set amount of time, then immediately plunging them into cold or iced water. Blanching time is crucial and varies with the vegetable and its size. Underblanching stimulates the activity of enzymes and is worse than no blanching. Overblanching causes loss of flavor, color, vitamins and minerals. Look up the blanching times for the specific items you are preparing to freeze. The blanching process stops enzyme activity that causes vegetables to lose nutrients and change texture. The cooled veggies can then be packed into bags, jars or other freezer-safe storage containers. Fruits or blanched vegetables can also be patted dry with clean kitchen towels, frozen in a single layer on cookie sheets, and then put into containers. Using cookie sheets for freezing ensures that the fruits and vegetables won't all stick together, thus allowing you to remove a handful at a time from the container.

Lastly, decide what you would like to do with the abundant amount of fresh produce you may not use whether it be selling it at the local farmer's market, giving to friends or donating it to the local soup kitchen.