

Food Choices and School Success

Picking healthier foods to enhance your child's academic success may be tastier and easier than you think [Peggy Kotsopoulos](#), Nutrition Consultant and Health Educator says that children today face greater risk of diabetes, heart disease, cancer and more notably, mental health and cognitive issues. Such issues include ADHD, poor concentration and decreased learning ability are linked to poor nutrition plus [poor academic performance](#).



Does your child enjoy eating fruits and vegetables every day? Loaded with vitamins, minerals and phytochemicals that are a defining part of optimum brain function. Dark leafy greens and other deeply colored fruits and vegetables are powerful nutrition sources. Blueberries are effective at reversing age-related deficits in memory in both animals and humans according to the journal [Free Radical Biology and Medicine](#). Starting kids early with phytochemically rich foods could increase what they learn and remember in school!

It's all about breakfast! Since it's considered the most important meal of the day, let's focus on making it as healthy as can be.

- Start out with [whole grains](#), such as oatmeal, raisin bran or whole wheat toast.
- Add fresh fruit and nuts This provides longer lasting energy and mental alertness throughout the morning at school.

Instead of offering your children refined sugars, which do little to promote health, try using lower "glycemic index" natural sweeteners in cooking such as pureed fruit (dried apricots, prunes, or unsweetened apple sauce) and flavor enhancing spices (like cinnamon, nutmeg and cloves). This can help reduce blood sugar fluctuations which effect your child's mood, concentration and performance during the school day.

Another important nutrient to add is omega-3 fatty acids, (alpha linolenic acid) which enhance [healthy brain development and performance](#). Children with the highest levels of omega-3s are less depressed and have improved concentration. Some rich sources of omega-3s include flax and hemp seeds, and walnuts. Some fish such as wild salmon, salmon, herring, and to a lesser extent tuna also contain omega-3 fatty acids and show positive benefits to short-term memory according to a [Finnish research study](#).



With the arrival of the new school year, consider making healthier choices that may help your children improve their health and success in the classroom. You'll be glad you did!