KEEPING SNACKS SIMPLE!
Vegetables, fruit, milk and alternatives

Guidelines for healthy snacks at school.

A healthy lifestyle and a greater capacity to learn are the motivating factors underlying the guidelines for healthy snacks at school.

Challenges associated with snacks at school have been noted for several years, both by parents and the school system. The recommendations and restrictions which may vary from one school, or class, to another can quickly complicate things for parents, as well as children. And, the more complicated it is, the more likely children are to have a snack that does not comply with the recommendations.

Keeping Snacks Simple: Vegetables, fruit, milk and alternatives...

With the goal of making snack choices easier, a working group composed of nutritionists, nurses, and dental hygienists from the CIUSSS-Estrie CHUS (RLS de La Pommeraie and RLS de la Haute-Yamaska) developed a portrait of the situation and the challenges involved. Teachers from the Val-des-Cerfs school board were also consulted.

Based on the results of their findings, as well as current recommendations regarding healthy eating and dental health, the working group developed these simple guidelines:

Encourage, with no restrictions, snacks from two food groups: **Vegetables and fruit / Milk and alternatives.**

The "Keeping Snacks Simple" guidelines aim to promote a variety of healthy snacks that provide energy and nutrients to children, and encourage good health and better concentration in school.

WHY THESE TWO FOOD GROUPS?

Most children do not eat enough vegetables, fruit, milk and alternatives; **these are the two least consumed food groups.**	Promoting snacks from these two food groups will help children **meet their nutrient requirements.**
Children are growing and **need energy.** *(However, a snack should not be mandatory: the basic rule remains to respect the child's appetite.)*	A snack including vegetables, fruit, milk and alternatives can **re-energize** the body and help the brain **stay focused** until the next meal.
In kindergarten, **4 out of 10 children have cavities.** This can lead to complications: • difficulty with eating, which can lead to delayed growth; • fatigue and problems sleeping; • poor concentration; • unnecessary and avoidable pain; • problems with pronunciation (in the case of tooth extraction).	Considering that children usually brush their teeth later in the day, eating sticky snacks in the morning **exposes teeth to cavities all day long.** In addition to affecting self-esteem and well-being, tooth decay can result in school absenteeism.
Snack time can be an opportunity to increase students' knowledge of healthy eating and to **develop motor skills and coordination** (using utensils, peeling fruits, cleaning up a mess, etc.). Autonomy in children is vital to the development of their self-confidence.	Reserving a time to snack in the classroom provides for **a pleasant eating environment,** one of the components that help children to develop good eating habits. *(The best approach is to respect the hunger and satiety cues in children. For example, allowing them to eat at another time if needed)*

The role of the school staff is to:

- Promote food from these two food groups and their health benefits;
- Allow children to bring any type of snack from these two food groups, without restrictions;
- Promote the guidelines with parents to encourage their collaboration.

The guidelines are in no way aimed at regulating snacks. Keep in mind that it is a parental responsibility to provide children with food. Therefore, food brought from home cannot be restricted.

TOGETHER WE CAN PROMOTE CHILDREN'S HEALTH!

The members of the working group are available to meet school staff to present the guidelines and propose strategies for the implementation and promotion of "Keeping Snacks Simple".
Resources for teachers and parents are available in French on the CSVDC website.

http://fenetreped.csvdc.qc.ca/2015/08/18/simplifions-la-collation/

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