



***Enhanced Learning
Educational Services***
“the study skills specialist”

LIFESTYLE AND BALANCE



To perform at your peak, you need to have balance in your life and a lifestyle that contributes to the health of your body and brain.

- You should read each point and **highlight the key phrases** in that point.
- Discuss with a friend or parent as you read through the handout.
- You may like to work through this over a number of sessions.

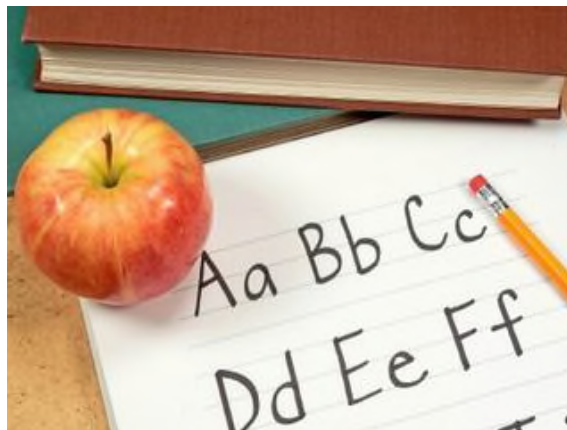
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1. WHAT YOU EAT

Always eat breakfast:

- If you don't feel like eating as soon as you get up, take something to school and eat it before class starts.
- Without breakfast your brain is running without fuel, you'll find it hard to concentrate in the first few lessons and by the first break you may start to feel sick.
- Also your metabolism slows if your body is deprived of food which means the body will hold on tight to everything (which is why people who skip meals when dieting can end up gaining weight - the body thinks you are starving it so jealously holds onto all fats and so on stored in the body).
- If you have fallen into the bad habit of skipping breakfast, start eating a little bit in the morning then gradually increase the fuel you give your body first thing in the morning.



What should you eat?

- Eat plenty of vegetables, legumes and fruits.
- Eat plenty of cereals (including breads, rice, pasta and noodles), preferably wholegrain.
- Include lean meat, fish, poultry and/or alternatives.
- Include milks, yoghurts, cheese and/or alternatives (preferably reduced-fat varieties).
- Limit saturated fat and moderate total fat intake (found in lots of take-away foods and junk foods).
- Choose foods low in salt.
- Consume only moderate amounts of sugars and foods containing added sugars (junk food again!).
- In simple terms: eat a range of healthy foods that are fresh and not processed. Eat more fruit and vegetables and less junk food and fast food.



- **NOTE:** Don't under eat and don't over eat. You need to eat sensible portions. Many people do tend to overeat. Your stomach is about 20 minutes behind your mind so if you eat until you feel absolutely full, 20 minutes later you are going to feel like you have overeaten.
- **NOTE:** If you are experiencing any eating disorders, it is essential to get help. You could start here: <http://thebutterflyfoundation.org.au/>

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When should you eat?

- 5 smaller meals throughout the day can be more effective than 3 larger ones. Breakfast, morning tea or break, lunch, when you get home from school, dinner. This will keep your energy up and help your body to process as efficiently as possible. Regular meals are important to ensure a good flow of fuel to the brain.

Why is breakfast so important?

- While you are sleeping your body burns up the fuel from dinner the night before. So if you don't eat in the morning the body has to use its own energy stores - the problem is that the stress hormones released so the body can access these energy stores can make you feel tired and make it difficult to concentrate.
- If students eat at all first thing in the morning, they often eat the same things, because it's quick, or because that's what they are used to. Usually these choices aren't the best ones because they are too rich in fat or sugar or not combined in the right way (eg. not enough protein with the carbohydrates).

A variety of studies have shown:

- Breakfast eaters are likely to achieve higher marks, and be more focused in class.
- Breakfast skippers are more likely to get a mid morning craving for sugar and junk food as a quick fix to the hunger they start to feel mid-morning.
- What you eat for breakfast also affects your ability to concentrate: it is a good idea to have about the same amount of proteins and carbohydrates in the meal and include high calcium foods (eg dairy).
- Students who skip breakfast as a misguided form of dieting set themselves up for erratic eating and overeating throughout the day.



What's so bad about junk food?

Obviously things like drugs and alcohol have a huge effect on your body and your brain. You would have learnt in Personal Development classes how you can actually destroy brain cells and impair brain function with substance abuse. But did you know that things like sugar and unhealthy foods can be a big toxin trap? When you grab a chocolate bar or a bag of chips you get a short fast energy burst and a high glucose hit, and the level of your blood sugar rises. This initial good feeling is quickly replaced by a sluggish and often depressed or tired feeling as the sugar hit quickly runs out. Refined sugar also makes blood acidic robbing the body of calcium which is bad news for your bones. It also destroys certain bacterias in the intestines, reducing vitamin B which inhibits thinking and makes us feel sleepy.

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