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BOOST YOUR ENERGY FOR BACK TO SCHOOL

July 2015

It's time to gear up for the start of a new school year. That means buying supplies and clothes, coordinating work, class and activity schedules, and adjusting to new routines. All the preparations can leave you feeling drained, but with the proper fuel, you can ensure both you and your children have the energy needed to ace each day.

Meal plan

Kick off the year by creating a meal plan, which will help you stay organized, maintain a good diet and avoid repeat trips to the store. To simplify shopping and preparation, put together a list of favorite meals and snacks, then group according to common ingredients. Use a dry erase calendar, spreadsheet or online template to plot out menus one week at a time. Then, draft a grocery list and stick to it. This will help you pass up the chips and cookies for more energy-boosting options. When you arrive home, immediately wash and prep your produce for the week, making it that much easier to make nutritious meals all week long.

Start the day off right

Wholesome breakfasts provide a pick-me-up in the morning and throughout the day. Squeeze some oranges for fresh juice with a Vitamin C boost. You can make a pitcher each weekend to last throughout the week. Serve with homemade granola bars for a satisfying start to the day.

Smoothies are another easy breakfast. Whip up personalized flavors for each family member using the pre-set Smoothie and Power Blends programs on the Vitamix S50, a powerful, personal blender. The machine's 20-ounce container becomes the perfect travel cup for school or work. Freeze a variety of

individual servings of fruit and vegetable combinations into zip-top bags, blend with yogurt, milk or juice, and head out the door. A nourishing smoothie provides the fuel necessary for a productive day.

Mid-day motivation

Prep power-packed lunches for school and work by including protein, fruits and vegetables in an assortment of tastes and textures. You can quickly prepare all kinds of dips and nut butters in the Vitamix S50's 40-ounce container. Try homemade hummus with cucumber slices and carrot sticks, with a side of strawberries and grapes. Or, create fun finger foods such as a peanut butter and apple wrap in a whole-wheat tortilla or ants on a log—almond butter and raisins on a celery stick.

Remember to stay hydrated, too. Water is fuel, and even mild dehydration can slow down body systems, resulting in fatigue. Carry a jug of water to drink throughout the day.

Dinner delight

Dinner is the perfect time to continue beneficial eating habits. Add extra vegetables to the menu with a squash cheese sauce for a new take on whole-wheat macaroni and cheese. Or bake a wholesome pizza using fresh pesto or a white bean purée as the sauce.

Instead of hitting the couch after dinner, complement your healthful eating routine by taking a walk with your family. Exercise provides a natural endorphin boost and will give you the extra motivation needed to maintain healthy habits.