

FALL 2023



New Jersey Healthy Kids Initiative

Newsletter



The mission of the New Jersey Healthy Kids Initiative (NJHKI) is to improve child health through evidence-based research, education, and practice in nutrition, culinary literacy, and physical activity. NJHKI's vision is that New Jersey children will be the healthiest in the country.

Working in collaboration with the New Jersey Institute for Food, Nutrition, and Health (IFNH) and the Child Health Institute of New Jersey (CHINJ), two leading research institutes at Rutgers University, the NJHKI connects with schools to identify and work together to help address which nutrition education, culinary literacy, and physical activity policy, system, and environmental needs are currently unmet.

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NJHKI Updates



NJHKI teamed up with Rutgers Psychology Child Development Center's Scarlet Kids summer camp to offer dozens of young children invaluable nutrition enrichment. Each week during the months of July and August, campers benefited from engaging nutrition lessons and activities that ranged from food composting to knife skill practice. IFNH Student Ambassadors, who were led by New Jersey Medical School student Rohan Hublikar, facilitated each lesson. Campers not only learned important nutrition information, but were exposed to different food concepts and items that they may not have previously been, promoting a lifelong interest in healthy eating habits.

This summer, the 2022-23 Rutgers Culture of Health School Program extended its nutrition curriculum to the New Brunswick Fit summer program. With sponsoring from New Brunswick Tomorrow and New Brunswick Public Schools, New Brunswick Police Captain Mike Bobadilla spearheads a free summer Strength & Conditioning program for New Brunswick teens. This year, NJHKI joined in order to deliver RCHSP culinary nutrition lessons.

Lessons included concepts such as food advertising and understanding Nutrition Facts Labels to using healthy protein sources for optimal refueling after a workout.

IFNH Student Ambassadors, under the supervision of NJHKI Program Development Administrator and CrossFit Level 3 Trainer, Dr. Erin Comollo, led teens through each lesson.

With this summer program's success, NJHKI looks forward to continuing its partnership with New Brunswick Fit next summer.



Beat Brown Bag Boredom

For many families, back to school means back to planning lunches and snacks for their children to bring to school. While it's important to encourage healthy eating habits, it's equally important to send your child with food items they will actually eat! To avoid food waste and hunger during the school day, try some of these tips:

- Plan lunches and snacks with your child, encouraging their input about likes and dislikes
- Include your child in grocery shopping and encourage them to pick out new foods to try
- Have your child help you pack their snack or lunch bags
- Incorporate fruits and veggies your child enjoys



- Visit eatright.org for more tips

Fueling Your Teen for Fall Sports

For teens who participate in fall sports like soccer, field hockey, and cross-country, for examples, eating nutritious foods is crucial for fueling their bodies after a long school day. Teen athletes need nutrition that will give them stamina as well as power and understanding how to eat for both performance goals is important.



Visit eatright.org to learn more.

- Choose quality calories from fruits, vegetables, whole grains, lean proteins, low-fat dairy, and heart-healthy fats
- Breakfast is a critical meal for teens
- Review school lunch menus to help teens who buy school lunches select foods that aid their performance
- Ensure your teen has a snack with healthy carbohydrates to eat before and after practice

Unplug and Reconnect

With kids in school and temperatures cooling off, many families spend more time in front of screens. Between school homework, back-to-school emails, and shorter daylight hours, an increase in screen time seems inevitable. With some planning, however, there are ways to cut back on recreational screen time and enjoy quality time as a family.



- Discuss screen time limits as a family, allowing for input from children and consider including a reward if your family meets its goal
- Play interactive video games that require getting up and moving around
- Enjoy screen-free dinners as a family and go for a walk together afterward
- Encourage children to connect with friends in person rather than only text or social media
- Consider saving TV for the weekends

Check out more tips at eatright.org

Want to stay up-to-date on all of the exciting work the New Jersey Healthy Kids Initiative is doing and hear more about upcoming events and opportunities for collaboration?

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mailing list!**

WE ARE ON SOCIAL MEDIA!

Make sure to follow us to stay up-to-date with what NJHKI is up to!



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New Jersey Institute for Food,
Nutrition, and Health

The Child Health Institute
of New Jersey