

Wednesday 1 February, 2012

New school year offers lesson in healthy eating

As thousands of children head into the new school year, the most important lesson they could learn about living a happy and healthy life can be found in their lunchboxes, a local health expert says.

Sydney Local Health District (SWS LHD) Director Community Nutrition, Sue Amanatidis, said it was important that good nutritional habits were established early in life to ensure lasting, long-term health benefits.

“Children who have an unhealthy weight are at a greater risk of having an unhealthy weight in adulthood and this of course is a major risk factor for a range of common diseases such as diabetes, hypertension and cancer.

“Raising a child on a varied diet of fruit, vegetables, whole grains and cereals, fish, lean meat, legumes, low fat dairy and healthy oils is the ideal way to set them on the right path to healthy eating,” she said.

Ms Amanatidis said a child often consumed up to 50 per cent of their daily calories at school.

“It is important that lunchboxes are well planned and contain a variety of healthy, yummy choices to ensure children consume enough nutrients and energy-rich food to help them concentrate, learn and play,” Ms Amanatidis said.

“Children need two servings of fruit and five servings of vegetables every day.

“A great way to include these into the lunchbox is by adding lettuce, celery and grated carrot to sandwich fillings, offering a piece of fruit or a small container of salad vegetables or through homemade muffins with dried fruit, carrot, zucchini, banana or pumpkin.

“If your child often brings back their lunch uneaten, try involving them in preparing their own lunchbox to keep them interested and boost their sense of excitement about eating their lunch.

“Allow children to choose from two or three healthy sandwich options and be creative – cut the sandwiches into different shapes and ask them to help put the sandwich together,” she said.

Involve your child when buying a lunch box and make sure they can open all the compartments easily.

For more creative ideas on what to include in the lunch box visit the Healthy Kids website:
<http://www.healthykids.nsw.com.au>