

Health Unit Media Release

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Prevent the “brain drain” with healthy foods this school year

Children need key nutrients such as protein, iron, calcium, and other vitamins and minerals to learn, grow and develop properly. However, the Canadian Community Health Survey indicates that children are not eating enough vegetables and fruit, milk and alternatives and whole grain products to meet their nutrient requirements for growth and brain development.

“When children eat healthy foods, their chances of doing well in school increase.” says Meena Parameswaran, Registered Dietitian at the Leeds, Grenville and Lanark District Health Unit. “The good news is *Canada’s Food Guide* is designed to help meet children’s nutrient needs, even on a budget.”

Often parents and caregivers rely on convenience foods such as prepackaged lunches, pop, fruit drinks and packaged snacks which do not provide the nutrients needed for learning, and these products can be expensive. “The demands of today’s economy are difficult; however, eating healthy foods does not have to be,” says Parameswaran, “Many healthy food choices are less expensive than buying some common convenience foods.”

To ensure that children get the necessary nutrients, parents and caregivers can use *Canada’s Food Guide* and provide children with foods from all four food groups every day. The Health Unit can provide free resources on healthy meals and snacks, shopping for healthy food on a budget and school nutrition programs.

For more information, or for free resources, please call the Leeds, Grenville and Lanark District Health Unit’s **Health Action Line toll free at 1-800-660-5853 (613-345-5685) and ask to speak with a Registered Dietitian.** You can also visit our website at www.healthunit.org/nutrition.

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Please leave a message on voice mail and Meena will call back as soon as possible.