

Healthy Habits, Healthy Hearts for Valentine's Day

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Action for Healthy Kids Encourages Parents and Teachers to Help Children Build Heart-Healthy Life Skills

Chicago, IL (January 26, 2010) -- Hearts are the traditional symbol of Valentine's Day. Action for Healthy Kids believes that this heart-filled holiday presents a perfect opportunity to teach children habits that will help keep their hearts healthy for life.

Action for Healthy Kids works with schools and families to help children learn to eat right, be active every day and be ready to learn. They give these tips for celebrating a healthier February 14th:

Celebrate healthy hearts throughout the day:

- For breakfast, add frozen raspberries to hot oatmeal for a pink bowl of heart-healthy goodness. Or, make heart-shaped buckwheat pancakes topped with strawberry yogurt.
- A whole wheat bagel with strawberry cream cheese makes the perfect mid-morning snack. For extra zing, dot with dried cherries or cranberries.
- Surprise kids with heart-shaped sandwiches. Use a large heart cookie-cutter to shape whole-grain bread. Include slices of red bell pepper and grape tomatoes on the side.
- The entire family will love a heart-healthy dinner. Serve whole-grain pasta with a festive red tomato sauce; add a can of tomato paste to the sauce for an extra nutrient boost. Or, broil heart-healthy salmon and top with a spoonful of cranberry sauce.

Use classroom parties to demonstrate that celebrations can still be healthy:

- Model nutritional balance. Offer low-fat milk, water and fresh fruit alongside Valentine's Day treats.
- Teach moderation. Offer one Valentine's Day treat per student, rather than a buffet of sweets.
- Offer healthier, yet tasty, options. Have kids top graham crackers with vanilla yogurt and fresh strawberries. Offer strawberry applesauce. Make pink, yogurt-based fruit smoothies served in kid-decorated cups.
- Get moving! Clear the desks and hold four-legged races, play musical chairs, or dance to some hip tunes.

- End the party with a heart-healthy stress reducer. Invite a parent to teach basic yoga moves, or simply lead students in deep breathing exercises.

An Action for Healthy Kids dietitian demonstrates these tips at http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=_QWA5as30Rs. For more information, visit ActionForHealthyKids.org.

About Action for Healthy Kids

Action for Healthy Kids® is the nation's leading nonprofit and largest volunteer network fighting childhood obesity and undernourishment by working with schools to improve nutrition and physical activity to help our kids learn to eat right, be active every day and be ready to learn. We provide expertise, volunteers, programs and resources nationwide through a unique collaboration of thousands of professionals, parents, educators, community volunteers and students, in partnership with more than 65 professional associations, government agencies and corporations. More information is available at ActionforHealthyKids.org.

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