



Ready, Set, Back to School: Stay on Track with Health Goals

As the first day of school approaches, the excitement of new beginnings can easily be overshadowed by the looming rush of daily routines. But with a little planning, you can ensure a smooth transition that keeps both your family's health and your own well-being in check.

The End of Morning Madness? Imagine it's a busy weekday morning. The alarm goes off, and the scramble to get everyone out the door begins. Instead of rushing to throw something together, you reach for the overnight oats you prepped the night before. Topped with fresh berries and a dollop of yogurt, this quick, nourishing breakfast gives everyone the energy they need to start their day right. Prepping breakfasts in advance not only fuels your family with healthy options but also grants you a few extra minutes to sip your coffee in peace!

Lunch: Solved. Picture the night before a school day. You've set aside a few minutes to pack lunches that will make your kids smile. A colorful bento box filled with whole-grain wraps, crunchy veggie sticks, and a sweet fruit salad is waiting in the fridge. You even toss in a note of encouragement to brighten their day. Not only does this ritual keep your kids eating well, but it also gives you a moment to pause and reflect on the care you're providing—not just for them, but for yourself too. The satisfaction of knowing they're eating nutritious food, in turn, nourishes your soul.

Prepare for the Daily Snack Attack. After school, the kids burst through the door, hungry and ready to snack. Instead of reaching for processed snacks, you've got a self-serve station stocked with sliced fruits, nuts, whole grain crackers, hummus, and homemade energy bites. Whether you're home during the day or at work, it's good to know there are healthy snacks waiting to keep the kids fueled until dinner.

Dinner Time! Thanks to your weekend meal prep, all you need to do is heat up that pre-made stir-fry with brown rice, or the hearty soup with crusty bread. The time you've saved gives you extra quality time with your family, and the money saved by avoiding takeout is always a welcome bonus.

With a bit of foresight and preparation, you can turn the hectic back-to-school season into an opportunity for healthier habits and more meaningful family time. By staying organized and prioritizing nutrition, you're not only setting your kids up for success but also ensuring that you take care of yourself in the process. Here's to a school year where everyone thrives!

No-Bake Disappearing Chocolate Chip Oat Bars



Reminiscent of chocolate chip cookies, these better-for-you bars are a favorite among kids. They're lower in added sugar, higher in fiber, and perfect for lunchboxes, briefcases, or as an after school pick-me-up.

Ingredients:

- 1½ cups rolled oats
- 1 cup pitted dates, sliced in half
- ½ cup unsweetened shredded coconut
- ¼ cup almond butter (or any nut/seed butter)
- 2 tablespoons honey or maple syrup
- 1 teaspoon vanilla extract
- ¼ teaspoon salt
- ½ cup dark chocolate chips
- 2 tablespoons ground flaxseeds (optional)

Soak the dates in warm water for about 10 minutes to soften them, then drain.

In a food processor, combine the dates, almond butter, honey, vanilla extract, and salt. Blend until you have a smooth, sticky mixture.

In a large bowl, mix the oats, shredded coconut, and optional chia seeds or flaxseeds.

Pour the date mixture into the bowl with the oats and coconut. Stir until everything is well combined.

Line an 8x8-inch baking dish with parchment paper. Press the mixture firmly and evenly into the dish. Place in the fridge for at least 1 hour to firm up.

Once firm, cut into bars. Store the bars in an airtight container in the fridge for up to a week.