

Back to school

With kids back at school, here are a few healthy tips to help kids and teenagers perform to their best ability this term.

Get enough sleep

Going to bed and getting up at the same time each day reduces stress and ensures a child's mind is sharp. Having a regular sleep pattern can increase exam performance by up to 30%.

Avoid marathon study sessions

In the run up to exams, breaking the study day into sections will mean more efficient learning as it is harder to concentrate for long periods without a break. A study plan will help achieve this. It is important to allow time for sleep, exercise and fun.

Fish Oils

Omega 3 stimulates serotonin in the brain which boosts mood and relieves stress. The fatty acid DHA (contained in omega 3 fish oils) has been shown in research to aid memory and concentration. Omega 3 fatty acids are primarily found in oily fish such as salmon, fresh tuna, mackerel, herring, sardines and pilchards. Everyone should eat two portions of fish per week, one of them oily. Irish children eat less than fish than their European cousins so supplementing on Omega 3 can be beneficial. MorEPA[®] from Whelehans is the richest and purest source of Omega 3 EPA fish oil available. Each once daily 1,000 mg capsule contains 535 mg EPA (approx) and 87 mg of DHA (approx), pure essential Omega 3 fatty acids. The capsules are free from odour and any fishy taste due to the addition of natural lemon. MorEPA Mini[®] is a strawberry flavour omega 3 supplement for children from age five upwards. It can be mixed with food and drinks such as yogurt and fruit juices. Recent research has shown that students who took MorEPA[®] fish oils were able to perform better at mental tasks.

There is no conclusive evidence, but Omega-3 supplementation is thought to be beneficial in preventing Attention-deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD), a condition that affects 3-5% of children. Research is ongoing on this subject.

The Perfect lunchbox

Including more fruit and vegetables in children's diet will improve growth, development and vitality and prevent a range of chronic diseases such as type 2 diabetes, heart disease, high blood pressure and cancer in later life. Research shows that the more fruit and veg are available and easily accessible for children, the more likely they are to eat them. Therefore if fruit is chopped up and ready to eat, children will eat more of them. There is evidence that children need to try new fruits and vegetables up to eight or nine times before they are liked or accepted.

Lunch

Many students experience fatigue or a dip in energy after lunch. High-protein lunches produce greater alertness and more focused attention, whereas lunches that are high in fat tend to lead to greater fatigue, sleepiness and distraction. Chicken, tuna, lean beef and eggs are examples of lunch options that are high in protein and low in fat.

Lunch box tips

Milk or water are best as drinks. Sugar free squash (one part squash to four parts water) is better than sugary minerals. Always opt for brown or wholegrain bread rather than white bread for sandwiches and rolls; they are higher in fibre and will keep your child fuller for longer. Cut sandwiches into fingers, squares or triangles for a bit of variety. For fillings, cucumber, tomatoes and apples are tasty. Relish can add flavour. Convenience snacks are high in fats, salts and sugar so should not be eaten on a regular basis. Include a piece of fruit every day. Vary the fruit everyday; examples include grapes, plums, peaches, bananas, orange segments, apple slices and kiwis (cut in half and eaten with a spoon). A good tip to prevent a sliced fruit going brown during the day is to sprinkle lemon over the sliced part. Try to include something from the dairy group every day which could include milk, yogurt or cheese. For variety, try cheese slices, cubes, triangles or grated cheese. Encourage your child to help you make their lunch or even to make their own lunch. Children are more inclined to eat it if they had a part in making it.

Just the Tonic!

Supplements should not be considered an alternative to a healthy diet. However, Whelehans Children's Tonic is a good option for those kids who won't eat enough fruit and veg. It contains iron and all the B vitamins which may be lacking in kids not fond of fruit and veg. Iron can relieve fatigue and improve concentration. B vitamins help with mental function and aid memory, growth and development, remove toxins and break down the proteins, carbohydrates and fats consumed to release energy.

Health Services for children

Whelehans Pharmacy has many health services for children as well as adults. Whelehans has an in store chiropodist every Tuesday and Thursday. Common conditions he treats for children include warts and verrucas, athlete's foot and ingrown toenails. He has a reduced rate of €25 for adults over 60 on Tuesdays. Our food intolerance test is aimed at children and adults. We can check for food intolerance to 59 of the most common causes of food intolerance. Food intolerance can be a cause or exacerbating factor for many childhood conditions including asthma, ADHD, bed wetting, eczema and sleep disturbance. Many children, especially those who are fussy eaters can be low in iron. Low iron can cause lethargy and can lead to poor concentration and school performance in children. We can check your child's iron levels with our 2 minute haemoglobin check. You don't need to book an appointment and it costs €5.

Services we have for adults include our heart screening service. We will check cholesterol level, diabetes, blood pressure, body mass index and percentage risk of heart disease. Our free hearing test service with our audiologist takes place on Mondays. Our Hopi Ear Candling service is €35 and takes place on Wednesdays. Call us at 04493 34591 to book any of our clinics.

For comprehensive and free health advice and information call in to Whelehans, log on to www.whelehans.ie or dial 04493 34591. You can also e-mail queries to info@whelehans.ie