

10 tips for fueling your child's brain power.



**Brain Power
Tips for Kids**

Developed by National PTA®
and Quaker® Oatmeal

1 Show your child love and affection

Showing your children that you love and appreciate them and creating a caring environment at home triggers better memory recall, thinking and problem solving skills. While loving your children may seem obvious, emerging research suggests that encouraging and facilitating emotional balance in young children can result in positive behavioral outcomes, which, in turn, enhance learning ability.

2 Feed your child breakfast everyday

Children get about one-fourth of their nutrient needs from breakfast, and research shows that skipping breakfast impairs children's performance in school. Among the effects are decreased attention span and ability to concentrate, restlessness, less energy and enthusiasm, and poor academic achievement. New research by Tufts University and the Quaker Oats Company finds that what children eat for breakfast also affects their ability to learn: The study compared the effects of eating two different breakfast foods versus no breakfast on cognitive performance in children and found that oatmeal, a food rich in carbohydrates, fiber and protein, improves children's performance on tasks of spatial memory, which is important for math and geography skills.

3 Ensure your child receives nine to 10 hours of sleep each night

To absorb core learning skills such as those required for reading, math and other tasks of memory, children require adequate sleep. A recent national survey has shown that 60 percent of children under the age of 18 complain of being tired during the day. Adequate sleep contributes to several important learning, emotional, behavioral and performance-related functions and children who do not get adequate sleep, unlike adults, can behave as if they have attention deficit and hyperactivity disorders.

4 Schedule regular health checkups for your child

Regular physicals, immunizations, hearing and vision screenings are key to monitoring your child's overall health. Poor health and nutri-

tional deficiencies as well as hunger have adverse affects on children's mental and physical performance and have been linked to impaired learning ability, attention deficits, hearing and vision problems, and low attendance and participation in school.

5 Take an active role in your child's education

For many years, research has shown that parents who are involved in their children's learning enhance their children's academic success. Some direct benefits derived from a parent's involvement include higher grades and test scores, long-term academic success and positive attitudes toward learning. Reading with your child, talking about school, showing concern for your child's progress and giving time to the school through organizations such as the PTA are a few simple ways to show your child you care about learning and their academic success.

6 Dedicate 10 to 60 minutes a day to your child's homework

Children who regularly spend time on assigned homework do better in school, especially as they move into the upper grades. Most educators agree that children in grades K-2 should spend no more than 20 minutes each school day on homework, while children in grades 3-6 should spend 30-60 minutes on homework each day. To help your children develop and maintain good study habits, make your home conducive to learning. Create a special place in your home for your child to work that is organized, quiet and free of distractions. Show your child that you think homework is important by staying involved in their assignments.

7 Set high, but realistic expectations for your child

Setting unrealistic expectations for your children can actually hinder their drive to perform well and can lead to depression, anxiety and a lack of self-esteem and confidence. The key to success is to foster a love of learning by keeping children challenged academically and setting realistic goals for their learning level. In doing so, parents will help their child achieve a greater level of confidence and academic success.

8 Engage your child in cultural arts activities

Participation in extracurricular activities has been linked to academic achievement in children. While it is important not to overwhelm your child with an exhausting schedule of activities, focusing some of your child's free time on music, the study of foreign language or another creative activity may help promote academic success. Emerging research shows that children who are exposed to music training improve their spatial reasoning skills, which are important skills needed for math, science and engineering. And in young children, music training has been shown to improve pre-reading and writing concepts. Other emerging research has linked higher SAT scores, enhanced creativity and problem solving skills with students' proficiency and years of study in foreign language.

9 Ensure your child participates in one hour of physical activity daily

Whether it's riding a bike, participating in an after-school sport or regularly attending a school physical education class, devoting an hour daily to physical activity and fitness can provide several lifelong health benefits. An emerging body of research on children also shows an association between regular participation in sports or physical exercise and improvements in self-esteem, discipline, some cognitive tasks and classroom behavior. And one report on children in the UK reported a link between greater levels of exercise with higher math and English SAT scores.

10 Give your child time for creative play

Creative playtime helps children learn and develop numerous core academic skills important for reading, writing, language development and problem solving. Encouraging activities such as drawing, playing dress-up, looking at books, painting and building blocks may help children learn to read, understand spatial relationships and develop important hand-eye coordination skills.

*Visit www.pta.org for a complete list of the research cited in this brochure.