

# Tips from NFRA

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## Getting Ready for Back-to-School / Family Meals Month

For many, the transition “back-to-school” comes with mixed emotions. There is a strong desire to get rambunctious kids back on a schedule and the dread of getting everyone back on a routine complete with earlier bedtimes, packed lunches, homework and after school activities. There is also an overwhelming responsibility for parents to pre-plan meals for their family’s week ahead. In your upcoming back-to-school or September Family Meals campaign, help alleviate this challenge by encouraging shoppers to take advantage of a positive routine aimed to create healthy habits for the entire family.

**Nutritious meals are critical to the success of children, academically and athletically.**  
**Below are a few tips to share with shoppers to help set up families for success this school year.**

### Tip #1: Forecast the Week Ahead

Track each family member’s schedule for the week to determine when quick, easy dinners or after-school snacks are needed. When do kids have after-school sports or activities? When are parent(s) working late? This can be done using a chalkboard or dry erase board in the kitchen to ensure everyone is on the same page.

### Tip #2: Involve the Entire Family

Allowing kids to get involved and make some decisions enables them to feel empowered to prepare meals for their family, and makes them more eager to eat that meal! Plus, it’s less of a headache for parents :)

- Take a family poll – Ask each family member to choose a meal that week, or provide them a list of options and ask them to vote.
- Get the kids in the kitchen meal prepping with you!
- Encourage new foods – It can take up to 20 times before a child accepts a new food.
- Allow each child to pick out one “fun food” at the grocery store that week.

### Tip #3: Take Advantage of Frozen Foods

Dedicating time on the weekends to prep meals ahead of time will set you up for success and ensure that your family has a nutritious meal. Meal prepping does not have to be laborious. Frozen foods are your friend. Steam a large batch of frozen rice, corn, and bell peppers and portion this into Mexican rice bowls or taco salads for desk-side lunches and tacos or enchiladas for dinners. When ready to eat, just add shredded cheese, salsa, and sour cream (or Greek yogurt) top it off! Viola - Taco Tuesday... and maybe Wednesday and Thursday too!

### Tip #4: Make Family Mealtime Delicious, Easy & Fun

**Start the day out right – break. that. fast.** Research shows breakfast eaters tend to have higher school attendance, better concentration, and overall higher test scores (Gordon, B. (2017). Power Up with Breakfast. Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics. Retrieved from [www.eatright.org/food/planning-and-prep/snack-and-meal-ideas/power-up-with-breakfast](http://www.eatright.org/food/planning-and-prep/snack-and-meal-ideas/power-up-with-breakfast)). Stock up on pre-portioned containers of yogurt and frozen waffles or prep overnight oats for when mornings are rushed. If you have a little extra time, make a smoothie with milk/alternative milk or yogurt and frozen fruit. Here are some additional breakfast ideas: [Silk's Simple Overnight Oatmeal](#) or [Dannon Light & Fit's Berry Good Waffle Sammie](#)

**No more boring lunches. Spice it up!** Lunch is a time to fuel the body and brain for the rest of the day – that is why it is so critical that children enjoy AND eat their lunch. While keeping in mind the main food groups (think MyPlate), make this time enjoyable for kids. Allow your kids to choose a fun lunch box or bento box! Give your child options and provide them liberty to pack their own lunch. Create shapes and sizes with food, using a cookie cutter to shape sandwiches, or roll a “typical sandwich” into a wrap or “sushi sandwich.” Check out these fun lunch options: [Sargento's Mini Star Sandwich Skewers](#) or [Kraft's Creamy Salsa Turkey Tortilla Wrap](#)

**Stock up on pre-portioned snacks.** Snacks are a great way to help meet nutrient gaps among children. They also serve as a “hold-over” before dinner or pre-fuel before an afterschool activity or sports practice. Grab for a pre-portioned snack such as a cheese stick, squeezable yogurts, or hummus and pretzels. If you’re feeling creative, try out these unique snack recipes: [Hood's Cucumber Bites](#) or [MorningStar Farms' Chik'n Parmesan Bites](#)

**Simplify Dinner.** (it’s worth repeating) Frozen foods are your friend (and savior) on crazy nights when you are tired and have whining, hungry kids. Microwave a bag of Asian veggies and frozen rice, add chicken and soy sauce, and you have stir-fry in the matter of minutes. Pop a cauliflower or whole wheat frozen pizza crust into the oven, add your kids’ favorite toppings, and serve with a side of steamed veggies. Other easy dinner ideas include: [Daisy's Pear Waldorf Salad](#) or [Birds Eye's Quick Chicken, Broccoli & Pasta Skillet](#)



For more tips and recipes, visit [EasyHomeMeals.com](http://EasyHomeMeals.com)

