

Benefits of Recess Before Lunch

Fact Sheet

Creating a Healthier Classroom

Why recess before lunch?

Students who go to recess after lunch are often thinking ahead to recess and rush to finish their lunch rather than taking the time to eat a well-balanced meal. When students go to lunch before recess, the National Food Service Management Institute notes, "The lunch [these students] do consume tends to consist of high-protein and high-fat foods, such as the entrée. If students have already participated in recess, they still eat their entrée, but will also eat more foods containing calcium and vitamins, such as milk, vegetables, and fruits." ("Insight," Spring 2004).

When recess is before lunch, students:

- waste less food.
- consume more food and nutrients.
- behave better on the playground, in the cafeteria, and in the classroom.
- eat at a more leisurely pace because the cafeteria atmosphere is more relaxed.
- are more ready to learn upon returning to the classroom immediately after lunch, so less instructional time is lost.
- perform better in the classroom because of increased nutrient intake and focused attention.

Where can I find more information about creating healthier classrooms?

For more information, check out these Web sites:

- www.doe.sd.gov/oess/cans/
- www.doe.sd.gov/oess/schoolhealth/
- www.doe.sd.gov/oess/cans/nutrition/
- www.healthysd.gov/

Contact Us:

Child and Adult Nutrition Services
South Dakota Department of Education
800 Governors Drive
Pierre, SD 57501-2235
Phone: (605) 773-3413
Fax: (605) 773-6846
www.doe.sd.gov/oess/cans/



How can your school make the change?

- Inform school faculty and staff, parents, students, and the community of the reasons for the change in order to build support.
- Realize that change takes time and effort and the first try may not work out.
- Develop routines for the following if you do not already have them in place:
 - Hand washing
 - Going to recess, coming in from recess and going to lunch, and going from the lunchroom back to the classroom
 - Getting sack lunches
 - Submitting lunch money
- Practice your new routine, so everyone knows what to do and when to do it.
- Schedule adequate time (25-30 minutes) for students to eat.
- Be committed, even through a trial period, to stick with it.
- Anticipate some resistance from school faculty, staff, parents, students and community.

For more information on recess before lunch, visit:

- [www.opi.state.mt.us/school food/recessBL.html](http://www.opi.state.mt.us/school%20food/recessBL.html)
- www.nutritionexplorations.org/pdf/sfs/scheduling_recess.pdf
- www.educationworld.com/a_admin/admin/admin389.shtml

