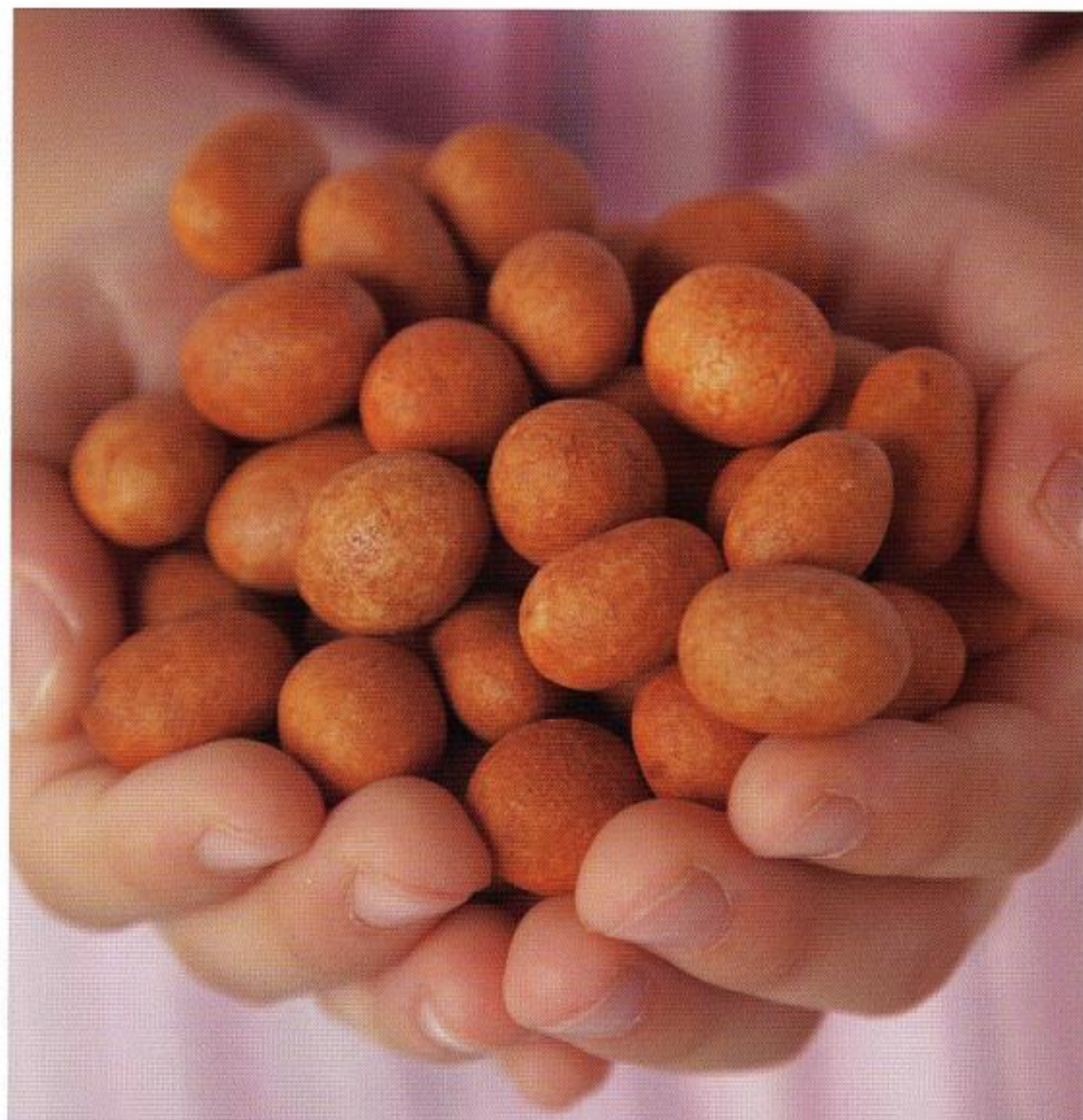


# HIGH focus foods

Feed your child right for optimum academic performance.

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**n**utrition affects children's behaviour, their school work performance, attendance and overall development.

Good nutrition can have a positive effect on their behaviour and academic work. It helps them to be more focused and comprehend lessons better. Children

experiencing hunger have a tendency to be tardy and inattentive. Many studies have shown that children who eat breakfast count faster in Maths and have better test results. They also have improved memory, cognitive function and attention span.

Here are some high focus foods to feed your kids:



## 1 Feed your child a low glycemic index breakfast rich in iron and B vitamins.

This will enable a sustained release of glucose, which is the brain's sole energy source. Breakfast also enhances the child's ability to perform demanding mental tasks faster as compared to those who do not eat breakfast. Overall nutrient intakes for the day rated better in those children who ate breakfast than those who skipped it.

Feed them cereal, toast and fruit. They can provide a significant proportion of a child's fibre intake and contain good amounts of vitamin B, potassium and zinc which will make the brain work at full capacity. Some quick and healthy breakfast foods:

- High fibre cereal with low fat milk with a piece of fruit. Check cereal packets; choose those without too much salt or sugar. A piece of fruit is better than fruit juice, as there is fibre in fruit. It's cheaper, too. Limit fruit juice to no more than two glasses a day.
- Nutella/peanut butter sandwich with a glass of milk.
- A toasted wholemeal cheese sandwich.
- Toast and a fruit smoothie made with milk and fruit blended smooth
- 1 to 2 slices of bread with Milo made with milk.

## 2 Eat dairy foods.

Dairy foods are not commonplace in an Asian diet but we should make an effort to integrate it in everyday diet. They are a source of good nutrition for our kids. Calcium rich foods encourage growth of brain tissue, neurotransmitters and enzymes. Dairy foods also provide protein, B vitamins and carbohydrate, which is brain fuel. B vitamins ensure nervous system health and improve and sustain concentration.

Some ways to include these foods are: yoghurt as a snack, cheese sandwich, cream cheese with biscuits, Milo or Horlicks made with milk instead of water. These foods can easily be part of your child's daily intake but often overlooked.

## 3 Listen to Popeye. He was right about iron.

Iron and lack of concentration are correlated. Iron deficiency in childhood is different from that in adulthood; it usually stems from the increased needs for growth that are not met. Anemia may be present and

this will lead to irritability, lethargy, poor concentration and minor behavioural problems that are often blamed for tiredness or just bad behaviour. Iron is needed for producing and converting energy in food which is why a lack of it will result in lethargy and inattentiveness.

Therefore choose foods high in iron like wholewheat bread, Milo, Nutella, iron-fortified cereals, lean red meat, pork and chicken, green leafy vegetables like spinach, baked beans, liver and seafood.

## 4 Go nutty with your kids.

Nuts are good brain food as they can maintain the ability and energy to think.


They are rich in protein, fibre and minerals. Since snacks make up 30% of a child's total nutrient intake for the day, give them nuts at snack time. These also contribute to their growth and development.

Nuts like almonds, pistachios and sunflower seeds can be part of a healthy breakfast or snack at recess time and in the day. A peanut butter or nutella sandwich make good breakfast options and even smeared on a cracker is a fun treat.

Avoid sugary and fatty foods that will cause lethargy and sluggishness. Sugary foods cause a spike in sugar levels followed by a drastic decline.

This will greatly affect behaviour and attention span in children. Foods to avoid would be sweetened drinks from cans and cordials, sweets, candies, icings on pastries, sugar coated foods like doughnuts or cakes, sweetened breakfast cereals, sweetened milk or just simply added sugar.

High fat foods take a long time to digest. A very oily meal like fish and chips or chicken nuggets with fries can take up to four hours to digest, this means that for four hours blood is diverted to your gastrointestinal system more so than to other parts of your body.

Your brain 'suffers' from the diverted oxygen supply that could have been better used for concentrating and paying attention in class. 

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