

# Academic Associates® learning centers



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25 Years Experience

## *Helpful Suggestions...*

Our goal is to maximize the learning experience for your children. Over the years, we have noticed several areas in which you, as parents and grandparents, can help support them in this endeavor and wanted to pass these suggestions on to you.

### **Sleep**

According to the National Sleep Foundation, *children ages 5-10 years need 10-11 hours of sleep, and older students ages 10-17 need from 8.5 to 9.25 hours of sleep.* There is a direct link between sleep and academic success. Just getting one less hour of the sleep you need makes it more difficult to assimilate and retain new knowledge and also to access previously learned information. In a study this year by Wolfson and Carskadon, "Teens who were receiving grades of C and below reported getting less sleep and sleeping with greater irregularity than their higher-achieving counterparts." To help your children get more benefit from sleeping, we suggest having a regular bedtime each night and to establish a sleep ritual before going to sleep by taking a relaxing bath or playing soothing music. It's not a good idea to exercise or to eat any foods containing caffeine or sugar within a few hours of sleeping.

### **Water**

About 60% of our body weight is water, and 85% of our brain tissue is water. Therefore, water is vital to the smooth functioning of our brain. Most reference sources recommend 6-8 glasses of water a day, with half of that amount being consumed during the school day. If you become dehydrated, your brain then releases a hormone called cortisol that has a "shrinkage" effect, making it harder for you to focus and concentrate. Other symptoms of dehydration are forgetfulness, sluggishness, and headaches. We recommend carrying a water bottle with you wherever you go!

### **Sugar**

If you are looking for the number one food to eliminate from your diet, Dr. Oz says that it should be sugar (aka sucrose, high-fructose corn syrup, etc.). There is a growing body of evidence linking excess sugar to high blood pressure, high cholesterol, liver disease,

*(see next page)*

and insulin resistance (which can lead to type 2 diabetes). Dr. Gerald Bernstein, a past president of the American Diabetes Association, noted that "If you go back 20 years, only 2% of new onset diabetes (type 2) cases were in people between 9 and 19 years old. ***Now, it's about 30% to 50%!***" Excess sugar spikes up your insulin, which then depresses your blood sugar, making you crave more—***sugar is actually addictive!***

Dr. Ward Dean believes that an unrecognized cause of ADD is often hypoglycemia (low blood sugar). He says when children eat a breakfast high in sugar, they often "crash" about two hours later in school. Hypoglycemia then causes a number of physical, mental and emotional changes, such as hyperactivity, loss of attention, inability to concentrate and emotional instability. Dr. Nancy Appleton tells of a study where children in a juvenile rehabilitation camp were put on a low sugar diet, and antisocial behavior dropped 44%!

According to the American Heart Association, the average American consumes 22 teaspoons of sugar a day—***triple*** the recommended amount! Just one can of soda contains about 9 teaspoons of sugar! Kids ages 14-18 eat the most sugar—34 teaspoons a day! There are now many "fruit-sweetened" foods available to help combat the attraction that many children have for sugar. Agave and stevia are good low-glycemic sweeteners. The best snacks are proteins, fresh fruits and vegetables.

## **Exercise**

Everyone knows how important exercise is to our health, and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention recommend that students get at least 60 minutes of moderate to vigorous exercise every day. However, you may not know that doing "***bilateral activities***" prior to learning stimulates both sides of your brain to work together—a good thing! These activities include walking around swinging your arms by your sides, jumping jacks, and cross crawls. Have your children do these activities just before starting their homework!

## **Omega-3**

Everyone also knows that a daily multivitamin and mineral supplement is a great way to make sure you get all the nutrients you need, but you may not be aware of how important omega-3 may be for both adults and children. Over 12 years ago, we read about omega-3 in the national best seller, *Miracle Cures*, by Jean Harper. In the 1950's, research showed the beneficial effects on the heart of eating fish (a natural source of omega-3). In the last few decades, more research has shown that ***omega-3 can increase brain power, attention levels, and reading skills.***