

Experts Say It's Time To Kick Up The Calcium In Kids' Diets

(NAPSA)—Kids need calcium to build and maintain strong bones, yet most aren't getting enough. Both the 2005 USDA Dietary Guidelines and the recent Surgeon General's Report on Bone Health and Osteoporosis identify inadequate calcium intake among children and adolescents as a critical problem. In fact, the Surgeon General estimates 10 million Americans have osteoporosis, 34 million are at risk and the incidence of bone disease could reach its highest number in history.

That's why experts are calling for kids to get more calcium along with vitamin D and physical activity to help build a solid foundation for the future.

"When you consider 90 percent of bone mass is formed by the age of 17, proper nutrition and activity during the early years is critical to building strong bones for the future," says registered dietitian Janet Helm. "That's why I encourage parents to embrace easy, fun food and fitness solutions to get their kids excited about eating right and being active."

Fun Foods With Calcium

For example, Kraft Macaroni & Cheese now has double the calcium—providing 20 percent of the Daily Value—so kids get the nutrition they need in a food they love.

Each one cup serving is an excellent source of calcium and a good source of protein, iron and many B vitamins. When prepared according to the "Light Preparation" instructions using fat-free milk and 65 percent vegetable oil spread, each serving is 60 percent lower in fat and 20 percent lower in calories than the classic preparation.

Here are some tips for kicking up the calcium in fun ways throughout the day:

- Make the most of mealtime. Toss vegetables and lean meats, such as chicken or extra lean



A BONE TO PICK—A Surgeon General's report indicates kids aren't getting enough calcium.

ground beef, into Kraft Macaroni & Cheese with double the calcium to boost other nutrients kids don't get enough of in their diet;

- Blend a simple smoothie with fat-free milk, low-fat yogurt, fresh or frozen fruit and ice for breakfast on the go;

- Pack two sticks of part-skim string-cheese in lunches or have them ready in the car after school or soccer practice for a fun and tasty calcium boost;

- Enjoy cheese and fruit kabobs by alternating low-fat cheese cubes with small apple slices on skewers

Bone-Building Activities

Encourage kids to put the video game down, turn the television off—and get moving.

Bone-building activities to make fitness fun and seem like everyday play include getting a game of soccer going in the backyard with the neighborhood kids and grabbing some jump ropes and heading to the local park for a jump roping contest. A family walk after dinner instead of watching TV is also a great idea.