

First Hand News

THE OFFICIAL PUBLICATION OF THE SCHOOL NUTRITION ASSOCIATION OF MICHIGAN

FALL 2023



NEW THIS YEAR:

**FREE BREAKFAST
AND LUNCH FOR ALL
STUDENTS!**

MDE-SNAM ANNUAL CONFERENCE & EXHIBIT SHOW

[ATTENDEE REGISTRATION](#)

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SILENT AUCTION ~ AWARDS ~ CELEBRITY ~ WELLNESS

Joe Pettit – Seeds to Success: The Power of Choices and Potential

DANCING

Customize Apron

MASSAGES WITH AMANDA

Chair Yoga with KAREN



November 02-05, 2023 Amway Grand Plaza Hotel & Devos Center | Grand Rapids [Directions](#)

Exhibit Show is Saturday, November 4, 2023, at the DeVos Place



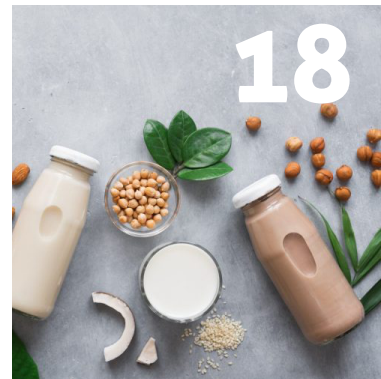
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Build lasting relationships within your team, increase your staff's proficiency and knowledge of regulations and how to apply them to what they do every day by setting up a SNAM Professional Development Course today!

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PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

Mary Darnton • SNAM President
Jenison and Hudsonville Schools

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Hello my friends,

Happy New Year! Yes, I know it's not January – but for many of us, this is the start of our year! Summer is officially gone from our minds and the days and night are getting cooler. While the weather may be getting colder, School Meals are HOT!

In July 2023, Governor Gretchen Whitmer signed the 2023-24 Michigan Budget into law, which gave all Prek-12 Public Schools students in Michigan school breakfasts and lunches meals at NO CHARGE! This is amazing news and builds on the efforts of states around the US to make school meals free.

The work does not end there. In order to make Healthy School Meals for All a permanent program, our Michigan School Meals Coalition, with help from the American Heart Association, No Kid Hungry, SNAM, and other allied partners are doing work with elected officials to enshrine this program into law beyond just the 2023-24 School Year. If you're asking yourself "What can I do to help?" then read on!

Keep telling your stories of how free meals help your students and families.

Keep good records and accurate meal participation data, so that you can show how no-cost school meals are making an impact at your schools.

Contact your local state Senators and Representatives. Tell them your success stories and share data.

We can make it happen!

Please join us at the SNAM/MDE Annual Conference, on November 2-5, 2023, at the lovely Amway Grand and Devos Place. We are excited to bring you another packed agenda. We will have Pre-Conference Sessions on Thursday November 2 – including another great field trip. Our friends at MDE will take the lead on Friday November 3, and our SNAM Education Sessions and Exhibit show happen on November 4. Our awards banquet takes place on Saturday night, and afterwards we'll have a DJ and the dance floor will be rocking! Wrapping up the conference on Sunday morning, we will install our new board and give away some awesome door prizes. And back by popular demand – BACON at BREAKFAST!!

I'd like to thank all of you for your help and support during the last year as I stepped into the presidency. SNAM is an organization that endures, and that requires people! This organization is run and governed by its members. Everyone has gifts and talents, and SNAM needs all kinds of folks to help. Connections tie us together and remind us that we are NOT ALONE. When we invest and connect with each other, we become more than the sum of our parts.

Thank you for a wonderful year!

Mary

EDITOR'S NOTEBOOK

Missy Elliott • Supervisor of Food Services
Armada Area Schools



The parking lot is crazy, hallways are filled with laughter, and most important to all of my School Nutrition colleagues, the cafeteria is slammed with students enjoying Free School Meals in Michigan. Our state is truly forward thinking, and this makes the the whole child learning concept complete!

At home, in my district, Armada Area Schools, we have already increased Breakfast participation over 300%, lunch over 80% from the 2022-23 School Year. The meal participation is steadily increasing, and I have not had a chance to complain, or stop and think about the crazy, like all of you, we just get it done and take pride seeing those happy students, nourished and content.

Hang in there, take time for yourselves, breathe, do something for yourself, to process the stress, the fun, I am reminding myself daily.

I hope to see all of you in Grand Rapids at the conference in November.

Take care!

FROM THE OFFICE

Scott Little • Executive Director
School Nutrition Association of Michigan



Greetings!

Welcome back to another school year – Should be an exciting year with kids eating free!

Your role in educating children is demonstrated by the success of these recent law changes.

SNAM is still here for you, as well. There are many training sessions being offered around the state to help everyone perform at the top of their game.

We are busy planning this year's Annual Conference at the Amway Grand Plaza in Grand Rapids, Nov 2-5. It is going to be an awesome conference year. In addition to lots of great professional development breakout sessions, we also will have Joe Pettit as our keynoter. Check him out at <https://joepettitinspires.com/>.

We'll also continue to provide connecting opportunities for everyone through our SNAM Variety Hours, and other resources, to help make sure you're supported.

We continue to explore how we can help you through training, information, communication, and more.

Finally, I want to thank Mary Darnton for her great leadership over the past year as president. She has been a fantastic leader and shown her passion for SNAM and feeding kids. It has been an honor to work with her this past year, and I look forward to continuing working with her in other ways into the future.

Please let us know how we can help.

All the best,

Scott

THE

ABCs

OF

SNP

Speaking Food Service Language

At the Nutrition Service Staff Back to School meetings last week, we had some fun with acronyms.

Arletha and I created this “story” and read it aloud with all the acronyms. Then, we challenged our staff to decode the story and learn what each acronym meant. It was fun and they all enjoyed learning more!

We hope you enjoy it!

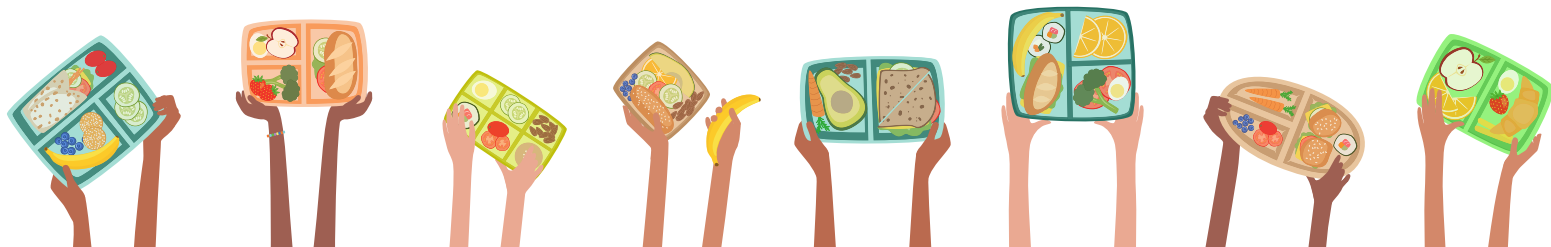
by Kristin Thompson and Arletha Banks, Holland Public Schools

“

For SY 23/24, SFA's of HPS and SPS will participate in the MSMP for the NSLP and SBP. We also participate in CACFP, SFSP and F2S. The FFVP program is also available. Because HPS is now CEP, we have to collect the EBF but SPS is Non-CEP, they collect the SMApp unless the family is DC or receives SNAP. One of our requirements is to follow the MDE and USDA meal pattern of OVS and includes analyzing the CN labels and M/MA, GC, FMC, FC, VGC (DG/RO/L/S/O). Weekly we receive a CNP bulletin from MDE with any important information. We use MM for POS. We login to MEIS for GEMS/MARS and NexSys for grant and state application information. Periodically the DHHS will stop in for a kitchen review and we need to be following the HACCP and SOP's. We purchase our food and supplies from GFS and also receive from DOD and CC. All students including GSRP, TK, ECSE, and DHH programs qualify for no-cost meals. Being in SNP means you need to know your ABC's! Let's have a great year!

”

New Michigan School Meals Program Ensures Every Child Provided Meals at School



Schools need to register for students to benefit from the program.

This past July, Gov. Gretchen Whitmer and the Michigan legislature passed into law a free breakfast and lunch program for all Michigan public school students. The Michigan School Meals program, a \$160 million budgeted state program, will help students thrive by providing nutritious, free meals to all of Michigan's 1.4 million public-school students.

This investment in students' health and well-being supports **Goal 3** of **Michigan's Top 10 Strategic Education Plan** – Improve the health, safety and wellness of all learners. In addition to provided meals being free of charge, they also follow USDA nutrition guidelines.



children,” said Dr. Michael Rice, State Superintendent. “Michigan School Meals is an investment that gives children in Michigan the opportunity to focus on learning and their future rather than where their next meal will come from.”

The Michigan School Meals program begins this year as students head back to school if their school opts into the program. The Michigan Department of Education (MDE) encourages parents/guardians to complete the applications or forms because they help to provide additional services and discounts, like health and wellness services, classroom resources, and fee waivers for college applications and admissions tests. MDE is prepared to support districts with program implementation.

It is simple for districts to opt-in to Michigan School Meals by following the [instructions](#). The 2024 Coordinated Application in NexSys is now ready for eligible districts to opt in and it must be approved prior to your first School Year 2023-2024 claim being made available.

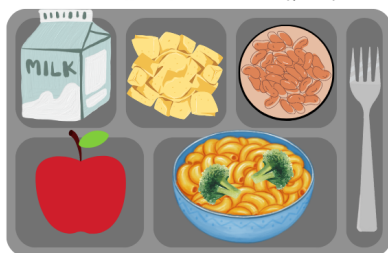
[View opt-in instructions >>](#)

“This is a win for all of Michigan's public-school

Michigan School Meals + 10 Cents a Meal

Roasted potatoes
grown in
Dickinson County,
MI (\$0.25)

Stewed pinto
beans grown in
Montcalm County,
MI (\$0.25)



Apple grown in
Kent County,
MI (\$0.50)

Broccoli grown in Macomb
County, MI (\$0.50)
with mac & cheese

Where's the money?

**Paid school
lunch cost:
\$0.00**

**Profit for
Michigan
farmers: \$1.50**

Michigan School Meals Only

Three bean chili
with beans grown
in New Mexico

Sugar snap
peas grown in
California



Banana
grown in
Costa Rica

Spaghetti with
tomatoes grown
in Florida

Where's the money?

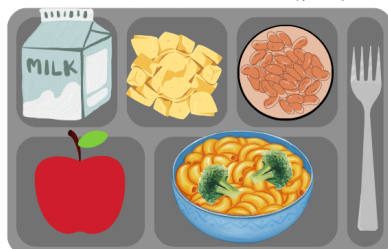
**Paid school
lunch cost:
\$0.00**

**Profit for
Michigan
farmers: \$0.00**

10 Cents a Meal + NSLP Only

Roasted potatoes
grown in
Dickinson County,
MI (\$0.25)

Stewed pinto
beans grown in
Montcalm County,
MI (\$0.25)



Apple grown in
Kent County,
MI (\$0.50)

Broccoli grown in Macomb
County, MI (\$0.50)
with mac & cheese

Where's the money?

**Paid school
lunch cost:
\$3.50**

**Profit for
Michigan
farmers: \$1.50**

NSLP Only

Three bean chili
with beans grown
in New Mexico

Sugar snap
peas grown in
California



Banana
grown in
Costa Rica

Spaghetti with
tomatoes grown
in Florida

Where's the money?

**Paid school
lunch cost:
\$3.50**

**Profit for
Michigan
farmers: \$0.00**





TRUST YOUR GUT

with Intuitive Eating

By: Krista Gazda

Have you ever been trapped in the diet cycle? This is when repeated attempts to restrict food intake lead to deprivation, followed by individuals eating “forbidden food.” This usually generates feelings of guilt and anger, and may lead to additional food restriction, starting the cycle over. Believe it or not, there is a way to avoid these negative feelings and free yourself from the diet cycle! If that sounds like a foreign idea, then keep reading to discover intuitive eating!

Intuitive eating consists of - 10 principles - to incorporate into your life:

Reject the Diet Mentality

Honor Your Hunger

Make Peace with Food

Challenge the Food Police

Respect Your Fullness

Discover the Satisfaction
Factor

Honor Your Feelings
without Using Food

Respect Your Body

Exercise - Feel the
Difference

Honor Your Health with
Gentle Nutrition

Intuitive eating is a self-care eating framework, developed by two dietitians, Evelyn Tribole and Elyse Resch, in 1995. This eating philosophy encourages you to honor both physical and mental health. It is a weight-inclusive, evidence-based model that integrates instinct, emotion, and rational thought, helping individuals make peace with food.

Intuitive eating is not a diet trend and does not involve restricting the foods you eat. Instead, it encourages individuals to trust their internal hunger, fullness, and satiety cues to help decide what to eat and how much to eat. It is about reconnecting with your body to consume food that supports your body and make you feel satisfied, without guilt. Over 90 studies on intuitive eating have found it's associated with positive body image and self-esteem, lower rates of disordered eating, and a higher general well-being. If this philosophy interests you, refer to the principles below. These are not a set of rigid rules and are meant to guide you through the journey of intuitive eating.

These principles work to create awareness and alignment to physical sensations to satisfy both biological and psychological needs while removing obstacles, which usually come from beliefs, rules, and thoughts from our minds. There is no pass or fail with intuitive eating. It promotes self-discovery and connection to your body and mind, empowering liberation from diet culture. It will require you to unlearn the negative messages around eating and food that have been ingrained in beliefs over the years.

How does it work?

Many people think that if there's no food restriction, what's stopping me from eating pizza or potato chips for every meal? The answer is in the solution - listening and trusting your body. When we truly listen to our bodies and their cues, we realize our bodies like variety. It takes practice to relearn your hunger and fullness signals and break free from dieting. Give yourself grace through the process, as there's both relief and fear around eating the foods you truly like.

What is the first step to listening and trusting your body?

Learning your hunger cues and checking if you're physically hungry is a great start to implementing this practice into your life. People may eat based on what time it is, or when their diet tells them to. This can cause a disconnect to our actual hunger cues. Listen to your stomach for a gnawing or empty feeling, which indicates that you're hungry. Many people think headaches, irritability, fatigue, and low energy indicate hunger, but those signs indicate you have waited too long. When we wait that long to eat, we become desperate for food and are likely to eat just about anything to reduce those symptoms. By learning and listening to your stomach, you can eat when your body is hungry, and figure out what food your body is asking for.

Interested in starting this eating philosophy? Here are some tips for beginners:

- Trust your body and inner hunger cues.
- Set boundaries around diet talk.
- Avoid mealtime distractions.
- Keep snacks on hand to avoid getting too hungry.
- Practice self-compassion and give yourself patience.

It is important to talk to your healthcare provider before changing your diet. For more information, visit www.intuitiveeating.org.



Sources:

<https://www.intuitiveeating.org/definition-of-intuitive-eating/>
<https://health.clevelandclinic.org/what-is-intuitive-eating/>

About the author:

Krista Gazda is a dietetic intern at the Michigan Department of Education and is working to receive her master's degree in Clinical Dietetics through Grand Valley State University.



Reitano Design Group is a National K-12 foodservice design firm. Our goal is to work with clients to entice our children to eat healthier. Through our understanding of foodservice design trends, our broad knowledge of foodservice equipment, and our research into generational data, we engage our clients to provide them with highly functional kitchens and serving spaces that will increase student participation.

Let's transform your space next!

Connect with our Michigan Project Leader, Lauren Charbonneau

 laurenc@reitanodesigngroup.com

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 ReitanoDesignGroup.com



Positive Health Messaging is NOT *Eating Carrots because they are “Good for You”*



By Veronika Olszewski

When health is talked about, it is often in terms of good and bad. Judgment is placed on food items and puts them in opposite categories. For example, we tell kids they should eat things because they are “good for them” instead of focusing on the awesome things that vegetables can do.

How about saying instead:

“Eat a carrot, they are orange. I love orange. It’s such a fun color.”

“Doesn’t the carrot taste so sweet and crunchy?”

“Carrots are full of vitamins. One of those vitamins can help you see in dim light like a superhero.”

Sounds silly, but it works. I believe the message when serving students should be that of hope and light. Kids love to take in the world around them and sometimes all it takes is a positive nudge in the right direction. The Message every day that they must eat vegetables and fruits “because I said so,” is not going to harbor the types of relationships with healthy foods that we want kids to have.

Words that are used influence how we feel about foods. If negative words are used, the student may feel bad. Using fear tactics may turn a child away from vegetables. If a person is not ready to make a change but are told they must change (or eat a specific food), a basic psychological

response is to become hostile. Therefore, it is important to stay positive and wait until the student is ready to take steps toward healthier choices.

Getting children to eat vegetables and fruits will always be an ongoing challenge. Our palates as humans naturally tend towards sweet and savory dishes. However, we are aware of the benefits of introducing vegetables early in child development. It allows children to quickly adapt to these new flavors and learn to enjoy them. The result is a rich and variable diet that prevents chronic disease later in life. It is important to do what we can as food providers to set them up for success.

There are many tips and hacks to getting a child excited about vegetables and fruits. We know that every child is different, so you might have to edit your approach based on the individual.

TRY THESE TIPS:

- Get creative with the presentation; make cute shapes, make the packaging neat, or cut veggies into easily recognizable shapes
- Add fresh herbs or other flavor components – steamed or raw vegetables are not always appetizing, even to adults
- Be a role model for the kids
- When kids are trying something new, focus on textures, colors, and positive experiences
- Wrap vegetable items into their current interests - for example, my parents told me to eat tree stars (or broccoli) growing up because of the Land Before Time movies
- Bring up fun facts or make fun posters
- Do not make kids feel bad for not liking a food or not taking something – empathize with their negative reaction and end with a ‘thank you for trying it’
- Brag about or uplift the kids who make healthy choices; this will help others around them be less shy about making healthy choices

About the Author: Veronika Olszewski is a current dietetic intern at the Michigan Department of Education that completed her graduate degree in Public Health from the University of Michigan. She has a Bachelor's in Food Sciences, as well as a Culinary Degree. She has a passion for working in schools and advocating for infants and children.

This project was funded using U.S. Department of Agriculture grant funds. This institution is an equal opportunity provider.

The goal of the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) funded E-STAR Grant is to improve school meal quality and student perception of meal quality in select school buildings in Michigan. School Nutrition Managers were paired with retired food service directors who served as their mentors for the two-year grant period. Despite many challenges, managers continued to work toward their goals by attending virtual training, developing, and implementing action plans, delivering training to their frontline staff, and holding regular meetings with their mentors.

Enhanced School Nutrition Strategies, Training, Action Plans, and Resources (E-STAR) Grant

Michigan Department of Education

By: Whitney Vance, Project Director; Viki Lorraine, Assistant Project Director; Janet Gaffke, Project Manager

BELLAIRE HIGH SCHOOL (Bellaire, MI)

“To many kids, we are often one of the most important parts of their day,” says Bellaire High School Food Service Director, Lori Lighthart. So, it was important for her to know what the students wanted. As part of her E-STAR work, Lori, who has been in food service for nearly 25

years, developed a student advisory group.

“It’s so important to get the kids perspective on our meals,” said Lori. “What they like and don’t like.”

Lori started her recruitment with a sign:





The 5-member student advisory committee meets monthly. “I was going to do it every other month,” said Lori, “but the kids were so enthusiastic we decided to do it monthly.” The students were involved in naming the cafeteria (Eagle’s Café) and taste testing new items. “We asked them for their ideas and put several new items they requested on the menu, including a chicken pot pie.”

Students also asked for a spice station. “It seems the spicier it is, the more the kids like it. The spiciest items go the quickest.”

When Lori decided to switch from Styrofoam to plastic trays, she discussed it with the advisory committee. “They liked that it helped the environment.” Lori also talks with the students about school meal regulations so they understand what can and can’t be served.

Lori is planning to get even more students involved next year. “We’re already talking with the kids about next year’s menu.”

“The kids need to know you want their honesty. That it’s OK to tell you exactly what they think. It’s important to talk with them about the whole school food environment, including the cafeteria and the staff.”

“The best part of it all was meeting with kids, talking face to face,” said Lori. “We got the kids to talk about what they eat at home, and got more involved in their lives. It has been a great way to improve rapport with the students.”



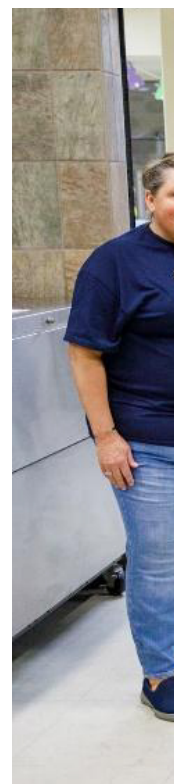
BENDLE HIGH SCHOOL (Burton, MI)



Three 5-gallon dispensers are serving up water that has created a buzz at Bendle High School in Burton, Michigan.

Head Cook, Shelly Swann, wanted to try something different. “I was trying to think of ideas to improve the cafeteria environment,” said Shelly. “I wanted it to be more inviting.” She landed on trying flavored waters.

Shelly handed the concept off to one of her five staff (Candie). “At first, she was hesitant,” said Shelly. But that soon changed. So far, Candie has come up with 15 different flavors. “I just provide the ingredients and Candie comes up with the recipe,” said Shelly. She’s always coming up with new ideas.” Strawberry lemonade has been the student’s favorite so far.



Candie also creates signs that tout the benefits of and vitamins in water. “The kids really enjoy the signs and learning about the ingredients.”

The dispensers are out from breakfast until the end of lunch. Students stop by and fill up their own containers between classes. “Some days we have to fill the dispensers twice a day,” said Shelly.

The dispensers feature two plain and one flavored water each day.

According to Shelly, E-STAR got her looking at things with a different perspective. “I started really looking at things from the kid’s point of view.” In addition to the infused water, Shelly also had a custom banner made that features the name of the cafeteria. “The students came up with the name,” said Shelly.





In line with making the cafeteria more inviting, Shelly also purchased menu boards that light up and highlight the day's feature items. "The kids used to come in and say 'what's for lunch?' Now they stop and read the signs and ohh and ahh." The new fruit stand Shelly purchased also adds lots of color to the cafeteria, as well as plenty of fresh fruits for a healthy grab and go.

And what is the pearl of wisdom Shelly has learned from her E-STAR work? "Provide opportunities for the kids to give their opinions. And don't forget to put the frozen fruit in water the night before to make sure it infuses. If you wait until the morning it doesn't infuse well," said Shelly with a grin.

There's so much to **discover!**



Discover! **KALAMAZOO**

LACTOSE INTOLERANCE: WHAT TO KNOW

by Amy Kumar

Do you enjoy eating dairy products but not the gastrointestinal consequences of eating them?

You are not alone — you are probably just experiencing something called lactose intolerance. And lactose intolerance is nothing to be embarrassed about, though the symptoms of it can be at times. In fact, it is estimated that roughly 75% of the world's population is lactose intolerant to some degree. This condition tends to run in families and among certain populations. According to John Hopkins Medicine, lactose intolerance is seen heavily in Asian Americans, African Americans, Mexican Americans, and Native Americans. Some common symptoms of lactose intolerance include bloating, stomach pain, gas, and impaired bowel movements. However, just because you have lactose tolerance, you don't have to avoid dairy altogether.

Read on for more recommendations to still include dairy as part of a nutritious diet with lactose intolerance.

So just what is lactose and why is this experience so common?

Lactose is a type of sugar naturally found in all dairy products. To be more scientific, it is a disaccharide composed of the monosaccharides glucose and galactose. This just means that it is a larger sugar unit composed of smaller, more simple sugars. Some common dairy products that we often eat include milk, yogurt, cheese, and ice cream. Dairy products can be an extremely beneficial source of nutrition for many people, with important nutrients such as protein, Vitamin D, and Calcium. The issue, of course, is not with dairy itself. The problem arises when we do not have enough lactase in our bodies, the enzyme needed to metabolically break down the lactose within these foods. When we do not have enough of this enzyme, lactose flows through the digestive tract, undigested, causing very uncomfortable symptoms.

There are two main types of lactose intolerance: primary and secondary.

Primary lactose intolerance is the most common type. It is caused by a natural decrease in lactase production with age.

It should be noted that most humans are born with sufficient lactase to metabolize our initial source of nutrition of breast milk. It is actually considered quite rare to witness lactose intolerance in children under the age of five. However, as infants are weaned from breastfeeding, the body naturally produces less and less of the lactase enzyme. The other type of lactose intolerance is called secondary lactose intolerance. This type is thought of to be pretty rare. It is caused by inflammation in the gut that momentarily inhibits the production of lactase. This can happen due to an injury or illness.

Regardless of the type of intolerance, the symptoms will likely be the same.

To alleviate the symptoms of lactose intolerance, an individual can:

1. Remove dairy from their diet entirely, or
2. Modify the ways in which they are consuming dairy. This is the best option.

For the second solution, there are a few recommendations, such as:

1. Consuming milk products with other foods
2. Choosing milk products naturally lower in lactose such as yogurt or hard cheese
3. Looking for dairy products that have been nutritionally modified to have reduced levels of lactose (Fairlife ®, Lactaid ®)
4. Reducing dairy consumption before working up gradually to higher amounts
5. Incorporating a lactase containing supplement when consuming dairy products
6. Experimenting with trying plant-based dairy alternatives such as soy, hemp, oat, coconut, or other nut milks that have been fortified to be nutritionally comparable to dairy.



It is also important to note that lactose can be found in many unsuspecting foods such as meat products, sauces, salad dressings, and baked goods. Because lactose intolerance can cause such a variety of unwanted symptoms, it is recommended to assess your own body's reactions to dairy to then determine what works best for you.

About the author:

Amy Kumar is a Dietetic Intern and Graduate student at Michigan State University. Throughout her internship, she has gained an interest in continuing on in the realm of School Nutrition in order to help children form healthy practices at an early age. She greatly looks forward to pursuing various opportunities in the vast field of dietetics.



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NAME: Emi Kreste

POSITION: Food, Nutrition and Wellness Supervisor

SCHOOL DISTRICT: L'Anse Creuse Public Schools

YEARS OF SERVICE IN CHILD NUTRITION PROGRAMS: 2

FAVORITE SCHOOL LUNCH MEAL: Macaroni and Cheese with different toppings – Mac and Cheese Bar

HOW WERE YOU INTRODUCED TO WORKING IN CHILD NUTRITION PROGRAMS?

I worked in the health care for 12 years I was exposed to many malnutrition pediatric patients that suffered a lot of life-threatening diseases as the result of improper nutrition. Also, obesity was rapidly increasing in children. That is when I decided that I would feel very accomplished in life if I became part of the other side of caring – Instead of treating the young patients, I wanted to be part of preventing the obesity and the malnutrition. What better field than School Child Nutrition would give you the opportunity to make a difference on these students' future health and wellbeing?

DESCRIBE THE DIFFERENT POSITIONS YOU HAVE HELD IN CHILD NUTRITION PROGRAMS:

To lead a team of 80 members you have to lead by example. So, learning ALL aspects of a day in a school kitchen was the first thing that I needed to do when I started. Prepping food, serving it, checking the students out and making sure that they are served a compliant meal, cleaning and sanitizing at the end of the service is what have had to do multiple times throughout my 2 years. There is nothing better than knowing your staff on a different level- not as their leader, but as their co-worker. I enjoy every aspect of serving our students. I also serve as the Wellness Chair for our district.

WHAT IS YOUR FAVORITE PART OF THE WORKDAY?

Visiting kitchens every day and making sure that they feel supported, have enough help and are working in a safe and positive environment. about their lunches when asked. That keeps you grounded.

WHAT IS YOUR FAVORITE THING TO DO AWAY FROM THE WORKDAY?

I love crafting. I also enjoy tutoring my relatives or help neighbors that need support with their homework, class studies. I also love studying languages, as I fluently write, speak and read 3 languages besides English: Albanian, Italian and Greek.



NAME: Lauren Charbonneau

POSITION: Foodservice Design Consultant

EMPLOYER: Reitano Design Group

YEARS OF SERVICE IN CHILD NUTRITION PROGRAMS: 17 - in various roles from dishwasher to designer!

FAVORITE SCHOOL LUNCH MEAL: Warm cookies and chocolate milk

DESCRIBE THE DIFFERENT POSITIONS YOU HAVE HELD IN CHILD NUTRITION PROGRAMS:

I was raised in a family with a passion for feeding people. Though I have been in the foodservice industry for many years, I only recently started working in Child Nutrition when I joined Reitano Design Group. We work with foodservice directors and staff to design spaces that best support the mission of enticing children to eat healthy. I quickly found this is an area of great interest and opportunity. Now I am also engaging my children's school district wellness committee where I hope to learn and share and continue to push for positive change.

WHAT IS YOUR FAVORITE PART OF THE WORKDAY?

Sharing knowledge with amazing partners and friends in this industry. I honestly learn something new every day.

WHAT IS YOUR FAVORITE THING TO DO AWAY FROM THE WORKDAY?

I love being outdoors with my family – exploring, camping, and gardening. We are big supporters of our school's Sharing Garden and Green Team. It is incredible to see children explore what it takes to get from seed to plate and understand the impact their choices have on our planet.





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