

# QSSB Health and Nutrition Outreach

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### Article

Back to School Soy Foods for Kids

By Pediatric Registered Dietitian, [Malina Malkani, MS, RDN, CDN](#)

It's back to school season! If you've been noodling on how best to set your children up for success this year, a great place to start is increasing the variety and nutrient-density of their diets. As a pediatric registered dietitian and mom of three, one of my favorite, affordable ways to add more protein, fiber, and brain-building nutrients into my family's diet is to serve more soy.

Soy is an excellent source of high-quality, sustainable, plant-based protein. Brimming with nutrients that support growing brains and bodies, soy offers heart-healthy essential fatty acids, dietary fiber for digestive health, and choline for brain development. Soy also offers a range of important vitamins and minerals for kids including iron for overall growth and immune function, calcium for strong bones, and potassium for optimal blood pressure.

When we think about helping children get the most out of their action-packed school days, good nutrition is key. Nutrient-rich foods in general support cognitive function, and fueling kids with a balance of protein, fiber, and healthy fat (similar to the nutrient profile found in soybeans) helps provide sustained energy levels and better focus during classes and activities which can help improve academic performance.

Give kids a strong send-off first thing in the morning with a balanced, nutrient-rich breakfast. Ideas include whole grain breakfast cereal topped with fruit and soy milk, soy yogurt parfaits made with granola, nuts and dried fruit, and [savory tofu frittatas](#) with chopped vegetables.

Edamame travels well and jams plenty of nutrition into packed lunches and snacks. Upgrade lunchboxes by packing some roasted edamame snacks or using hummus made with edamame as a sandwich filling or dip for crackers and raw veggies.

If you haven't yet tried building a family dinner around satisfying, protein-packed tofu, try preparing [Baked \(or Air-fried\) Sesame Tofu Bites](#), topping [noodle or grain bowls with tofu](#), or stir-frying tofu with a tasty sauce. But don't stop there! Tempeh offers another interesting texture which can be marinated, baked, or grilled. Grated tempeh can also be used instead of ground meat in casseroles, plant-based "meatballs," stews, or chili.

Don't forget that it can take [an average of fifteen exposures before a child will accept a new food](#), so if any of these options aren't a hit right away, keep serving them!

If you are concerned about the potential for soy allergies, it may help to know that while soy is among the top nine allergenic foods, [soy allergy is relatively rare. Only about .4% of children are allergic to soy and the majority will outgrow their allergy before age ten](#). However, every child comes with their own unique set of dietary needs and preferences, so if you have specific questions about your child's diet, speak with your healthcare clinician.

Let's gear up for back to school by embracing soy foods and their unique combination of versatile flavors, textures, and nutrients. Here's to a healthy, happy new school year!

## References:

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## Bio:

[Malina Malkani](#), MS, RDN, CDN, is the pediatric registered dietitian, best-selling author, speaker, and single mom of 3 behind the Instagram and TikTok handle, [@healthy.mom.healthy.kids](#). A top nutrition influencer dedicated to educating her audience of over 140,000 followers about infant and childhood nutrition, Malina is a trusted expert in local and national media outlets and owns a nutrition consulting company and private practice that helps caregivers feed their babies and kids with confidence. She is the best-selling author of [Simple and Safe Baby-Led Weaning: How to Integrate Foods, Manage Portion Sizes and Identify Allergies](#) and the creator of two online courses for parents: [Safe & Simple Baby-Led Feeding](#) and [Solve Picky Eating](#). A 2022 and 2023 Forbes Health Advisory Board Member, member of the Advisory Council for the RWJF *Reframing Child Health and Obesity* project, and former national media spokesperson for the Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics, Malina completed her undergraduate degrees at Northwestern University and master's degree in clinical nutrition at New York University.



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