

Nutrition Nuggets

Food and Fitness for a Healthy Child

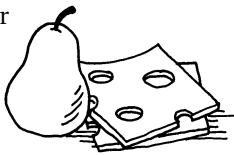
January 2014

Elkhorn Area School District
Ellen Leasure, Food Service Supervisor

BEST BITES

Combine food groups

Snacks are healthiest if they include at least two food groups. Have your youngster draw a picture of the groups: protein, fruits, vegetables, grains, and dairy. Then, ask him to choose from two of them. For instance, he might have a pear (fruit) with cheese slices (dairy) or yogurt (dairy) with almonds (protein).



Me, too!

You can encourage your child to exercise more by what you do than by what you say. That's because children of active parents tend to be active, too. When you take a walk or try a Zumba class, mention it. Let your youngster know how good exercise makes you feel, and ask what activity she did that day.

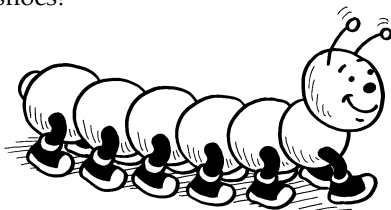
DID YOU KNOW?

When children are rewarded with ice cream or candy for getting good grades or doing chores, they learn to associate sweets with achievement. Consider other ways of showing your youngsters you're proud of them. For example, offer kind words, spend extra time with them, or give them hugs.

Just for fun

Q: Why was the centipede always late for soccer practice?

A: It took him too long to put on his shoes!



Eat your veggies (and more)

Can't get your child to eat her vegetables—or any other food that's good for her? Consider these strategies.

End the power struggles

Trying to force your youngster to eat new foods or clean her plate will most likely make her dig her heels in deeper. Instead, give her some control over her eating. Have her help choose the menu and prepare the food. At the table, offer choices: "Would you like broccoli or carrots?"



Do the unexpected

Throw your child off balance with a jolt of fun—she may surprise you and happily eat the healthy food. For example, serve cottage cheese in an ice cream cone. Decorate oatmeal with a "face" of raisins, banana slices, and blueberries. Let her eat with her fingers, or serve breakfast for dinner and dinner for breakfast. Mixing things up can be a powerful incentive for getting your youngster to try new foods!

Don't offer substitutions

You don't have time to be a short-order cook, and you won't do your child any favors in the long run by making mac 'n' cheese for her every night. Tell her you expect her to try at least a bite of what you've made, and then don't focus on how much she eats or doesn't eat. Just try to relax and continue with your pleasant dinner conversation. She'll realize that what she eats is her responsibility. Remember, the goal is to get your youngster to eat a variety of foods long term—not just at one meal. ♥

Tips for picky eaters

Try these ideas for encouraging fussy eaters to be...well, less fussy.

1. Offer new foods at the beginning of a meal when your youngster is hungriest.
2. Notice which of his friends are good eaters, and invite them to stay for meals. Positive peer pressure can help!
3. Many kids prefer raw vegetables over cooked. Try these: snap or snow peas, cherry tomatoes, green or yellow beans, asparagus tips, cauliflower florets, celery sticks, bell pepper strips, and spinach or lettuce leaves.
4. Get blank address labels, and write, "I tried it!" on each one. When your youngster samples a new food, give him a sticker to wear. ♥



Protein: Make it lean

Most Americans get enough protein in their diets, but often it's not healthy, lean protein. Make sure your child eats mostly lean protein with these suggestions:

- Buy poultry, lean cuts of meat (flank steak, pork tenderloin, leg of lamb), and ground beef that is at least 90% lean. Also, meats marked "choice" or "select" tend to be leaner than "prime" cuts. *Idea:* Try veggie burgers instead of hamburgers.
- Serve fish or seafood at least twice a week. Grill, broil, or bake it rather than frying it.
- Build lean protein into breakfast with fat-free milk, hard-boiled eggs, or protein-enriched cereal.



Rice and beans

Put lean protein in your child's diet with these easy-to-make bean burritos. Heat a 15.5-oz. can of black beans (drained, rinsed). Add 2 cups cooked brown rice and 1 cup diced tomato. Stir until warm. Divide the mixture onto 4 tortillas. Top with shredded low-fat cheddar cheese, and fold into burritos.

- At snack time, offer a small handful of unsalted nuts or sunflower seeds.
- Add tofu to stews, soups, and stir-fry.

Note: Children should have 5½ ounces of protein a day. One egg, 1 tbsp. peanut butter, ½ ounce nuts or seeds, and ¼ cup beans each count as 1 ounce. ♥

ACTIVITY CORNER Catch it if you can!

A game of catch is a fun way for your family to stay active. Here are a few creative twists.

Sticky to it. Cover a Wiffle ball with squares of Velcro (available at craft stores). Let each player wear a knit glove or mitten, and play a game of "sticky catch and throw."

Sink a bucket. Have one person hold a bucket while the other players toss tennis balls toward it. The bucket holder runs around trying to catch as many balls as possible.



Score points. Throw a ball up in the air, and call out a number between 1 and 10. Whoever catches it gets that many points. Play to 100. ♥

PARENT TO PARENT

A fit house

Recently I looked around our apartment and realized it's no wonder our son wants to watch TV or play electronic games all the time—we're surrounded by screens! I decided that I needed to make some changes if I wanted him to get more exercise.

My neighbor Laurie gave me a good idea. She said her family uses the "basket system." Cell phones, tablets, laptops, and video games are put into a basket in the closet for most of the day. Active gear goes in a basket displayed in the family room.

I explained the new system to my son and got him involved in stocking the workout basket. So far we've put in a jump rope, an indoor hopscotch mat, balls for juggling, and a Hacky Sack to kick around. Now we're working on powering down our screens and turning up the exercise. ♥



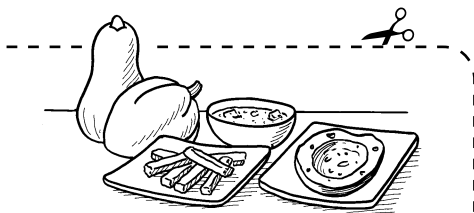
IN THE KITCHEN

Simply squash

Embrace the season for winter squash with these kid-pleasing recipes.

"Fries." Cut a (peeled) butternut squash into fry-shaped slices. Lay them on a baking sheet that's coated with nonstick spray. Bake at 425° for 20 minutes, turn them over, and bake 15 minutes more, until crisp.

Soup. In a stockpot, sauté 1 chopped onion in 2 tsp. olive oil. When soft, stir in ¼ tsp. each of ground allspice and ginger. Add 4 cups butternut or acorn squash cubes and 4 cups low-sodium broth (chicken or vegetable). Simmer



until the squash is tender, about 15 minutes. Cool slightly, and puree in a blender until smooth.

Baked. Slice an acorn squash in half, and discard the seeds. Place the squash in a baking pan. Add 1 tsp. butter and 1 tsp. maple syrup to each half. Roast at 400° for 1 hour, until browned.

Note: Using frozen cubed squash saves time—and provides the same nutrients as fresh. ♥

OUR PURPOSE

To provide busy parents with practical ways to promote healthy nutrition and physical activity for their children.

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Nutrition Nuggets™ is reviewed by a registered dietitian. Consult a physician before beginning any major change in diet or exercise.

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