

Nutrition Nuggets

Food and Fitness for a Healthy Child

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Elkhorn Area School District
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BEST BITES

Skip the toy

When stopping for fast food, let your child know that restaurants aren't toy stores—meaning he should focus on the meal and not the toy. In fact, avoiding kids' meals altogether can lead to healthier choices. Encourage him to order from the regular menu and look for words like *grilled* and *baked*, rather than *fried* or *breaded*.

Hallway races

Do you run out of ideas for physical activity as the weather turns colder? Here's a thought: Turn your hallway into a speedway! Your youngster could race down the hall and back. Or she might do laps by running around the perimeter of the hallway. You can even tape up crepe paper streamers for her to break through at the "finish line."

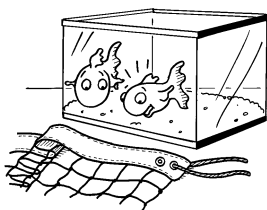
DID YOU KNOW?

Most school districts have a school wellness council of parents, school staff, and community members who advise them on ways to keep kids healthy. As a member, you may help survey families or discuss new policies. To get involved, check at the school office for more information.

Just for fun

Q: Why don't fish play tennis?

A: Because they're afraid they might get caught in the net.



Cut down on screen time

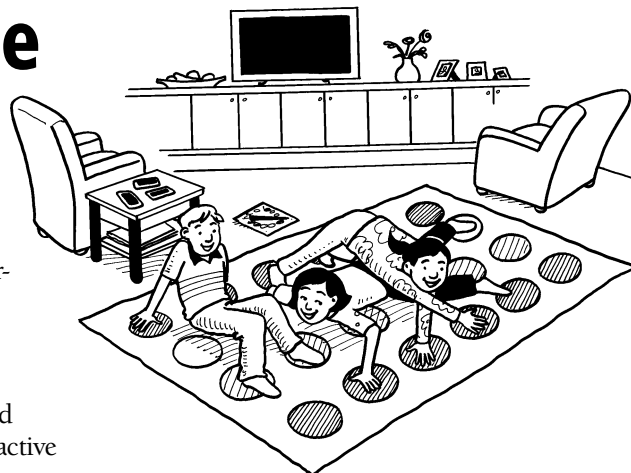
Time spent in front of a screen—whether it's a TV, computer, video game, cell phone, or tablet—is time spent not being active. Plus, children are more likely to overeat when they mix screens and snacks. Consider these ideas.

Find a starting point

For one week, have your child record her screen time and her active time (outside play, sports practices, games, dancing). Then, set a goal for balancing them, shooting for at least equal screen and active time—and preferably *more* time for activity. *Note:* Experts recommend no more than 1–2 hours of screen time a day.

Plot your strategy

Cutting back gradually will help your youngster get used to the changes. For instance, reduce daily screen time by 15 minutes each week. Decide together which TV shows she will watch, and make sure she turns off the set when each program ends. Also, schedule in her computer or



video game time, and have her set an alarm as a signal to stop.

Look for alternatives

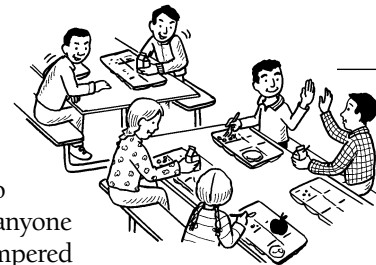
While it may be tempting to let your child entertain herself with electronics, encourage her to find other things to do. Suggest a game, ask her to cook dinner with you, or plan fun family activities. When you go out, leave the video games at home and listen to music or talk in the car instead. *Tip:* Avoid using screen time as a reward or a punishment—that just makes it seem even more important to your youngster. ♥

Bullying & food allergies

As if food allergies themselves aren't enough to deal with, children with these allergies are sometimes targeted by bullies.

If your youngster has allergies, remind him to stay away from trouble foods—no matter what anyone says to him. If he suspects his food has been tampered with (for example, kids are laughing and watching to see whether he'll eat something), he should not touch it. And if he feels threatened, he should remain calm—so he doesn't give the bullies any satisfaction—and immediately tell an adult.

Encourage your child to have a close friend be his "allergy buddy" and watch out for problems. Finally, if you fear he is being bullied, talk to his teacher right away. This isn't a problem he should have to handle alone. ♥



Sounds healthy? Think again

Some foods catch us by surprise. They sound like they're nutritious, but they really aren't. Here are a few to watch out for.

Prepared salads. When you hear the word *salad*, you might automatically think "healthy." Think again if it's made with regular mayonnaise (chicken salad, potato salad, carrot-raisin) or topped with regular dressing. *Healthier alternative:* Greens and fresh vegetables with a drizzle of low-fat dressing.



Drinks. Flavored water and sports drinks may contain added sugar, artificial sweeteners, or sodium. *Healthier alternative:* Water with a "fruit ice cube" (freeze water with lemon or orange slices in a muffin tin).

Frozen yogurt. While healthier than ice cream, this frozen treat is often just a vehicle for candy and other high-calorie toppings. Also, at self-serve fro-yo

shops, people tend to serve themselves a large portion. *Healthier alternative:* Freeze a container of nonfat Greek yogurt (stir fruit from the bottom first). Eat when slushy. ●



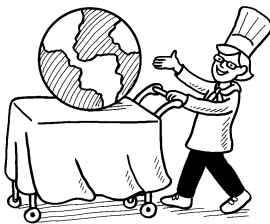
PARENT TO PARENT

International Night

Last spring, our daughter's school held an International Night, where families brought in foods from their cultures. Megan was so interested in the foods she sampled that she asked if we could have International Night at home. We decided that once a month we would pick a country and find recipes to make.

Last month we celebrated Denmark with *smørbrød* (open-faced) sandwiches. We put out rye bread and toppings like sliced tomatoes, mustard, roast beef, smoked salmon, cheese, and sliced hard-boiled egg. Everyone had fun making their own sandwiches and practiced saying "*Tak for mad*"—"Thanks for the meal" in Danish.

Next we're thinking about having Korean or Russian night. I'm glad our daughter is learning more about other cultures—and we're enjoying new foods at the same time! ●



ACTIVITY CORNER

Family fitness contests

There's nothing like a little competition for encouraging your youngster to get exercise. Try these ways to step up the action in your house.

How high, how far?

Pick a contest that begins with "How" for each day of the week. *Examples:* "How high can you jump?" "How many jumping jacks can you do?" Keep track of everyone's scores, and declare a winner for each contest. *Idea:* Make the challenge a cooperative one. For instance, you could say, "How far can we walk?" and set off for a family walk in your neighborhood, on a trail, or downtown.



Beat the clock

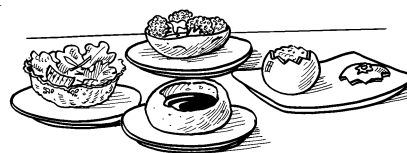
Brainstorm a list of individual activities like jumping rope, hopping on one foot, or doing cartwheels. Give each person a turn while someone times him (with a stopwatch or cell phone). Who can do the activity the longest? *Idea:* Name a sequence (do five push-ups, jump forward and backward five times, and do a cartwheel). Time each person to see who gets through the series the fastest. ●

IN THE KITCHEN

Edible bowls

What fun to make your bowl and eat it, too! Delight your child with these healthy ideas for edible bowls:

- Put 3 tbsp. Parmesan cheese on parchment paper, and microwave until golden brown, about 2 minutes. Turn a small bowl upside down on the countertop, flip the paper (with the cheese) onto it, and mold the cheese around the bowl. When cool, peel off the parchment paper and remove the molding bowl. Fill your cheese bowl with a tossed salad.



- Hollow out a whole-wheat roll. Heat tomato soup, and spoon it into the bread bowl.

- Scoop out cherry tomatoes, and fill with hummus. Or remove the insides of a regular tomato, and put in tuna salad (made with light mayonnaise).

- Microwave a potato for 8–10 minutes. Slice in half and scoop out most of the flesh. Fill with cooked broccoli

and shredded low-fat cheddar cheese, then microwave to melt the cheese. ●

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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