

Nutrition Nuggets

Food and Fitness for a Healthy Child

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Towns County Schools
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BEST BITES

Clean hands

Encourage your child to keep germs from spreading by washing her hands before eating or preparing food. She should wet her hands, spend 15–20 seconds lathering with soap, and rinse off. Help her gauge the time by having her say the alphabet or sing “Happy Birthday” twice as she washes.



Be a “star”

Here’s a fun exercise for the whole family. Lie on your back with arms and legs stretched out to make a star shape. Lift your left leg, raise your head and shoulders off the ground, and reach to touch your left foot with your right hand. Alternate sides. *Idea:* See who can do the most “star touches” in a minute.

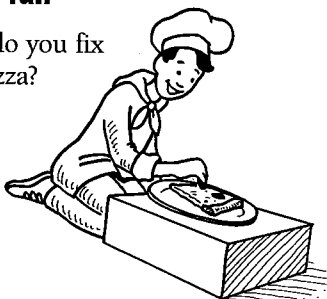
Use up food

Consider designating one night a week as “leftovers night.” Let your youngsters help out by heating up food from previous meals in the microwave (with your supervision) and arranging the food attractively on dishes. They’ll see that you try not to waste food—and you’ll get a night off from cooking.

Just for fun

Q: How do you fix a torn pizza?

A: With tomato paste!



Step up to whole grains

What do popcorn, oatmeal, and wild rice have in common? They are all whole grains. And nutritionists recommend that children have at least three servings of whole grains a day. Here are ways to put these healthy foods into your youngster’s daily routine.

Make it gradual

Get your child used to whole grains by working them in gradually. For instance, make both white and brown rice and mix them together, or prepare regular and whole-grain pasta and toss them in a bowl with sauce. As he becomes used to the taste, build up to three-quarters whole grains, and then eventually to all whole grains.

“Hide” them here

Try adding whole grains to foods your youngster regularly eats. You can stir oats into ground beef or ground turkey when you’re fixing hamburgers, meatballs, or meatloaf. Or add barley or bulgur wheat to soups and casseroles.



Find new favorites

When you’re food shopping with your child, help him look for whole-grain versions of foods he already likes. He might prefer whole-wheat bread marked “soft”—the texture will be closer to the white bread he is used to. Or let him pick out whole-grain varieties of cereals and crackers. If he helps choose the foods, he’s more likely to eat them.

Note: Teach your youngster to check nutrition labels—if a food has 3 grams or more of fiber, it is a good source of whole grains. ●

Water break

Switching from soda and fruit juice to water is one of the biggest changes you can make to cut sugar from your child’s diet. Consider these strategies:

- Serve water—and water only—with dinner every night. You could put it in a pretty pitcher with ice cubes, and let your youngster be in charge of pouring.
- Make different “flavored” water each day. Fill a pitcher with water, and add fresh fruit or vegetables. *Examples:* cucumber or orange slices, strawberries, raspberries.
- Kids who like soda may have an easier time drinking water with “bubbles.” Get sparkling water (no sugar added) in your child’s favorite flavor, such as cherry or lemon-lime.

Tip: If your youngster complains that she doesn’t like water, pick a time you know she is thirsty and ask her to drink three sips. Once she has a little, she just might keep going. ●



Spring forward!

As the days grow longer and warmer, let your children take advantage of the season to enjoy active time outside. Try these ideas.

Hunt for signs of spring. Together, make a list of things you can find in spring (buds on trees, daffodils, birds' nests). Take the list with you for a walk through a nature trail or around your neighborhood. The first person to spot each item marks her initials by it. Who can find the most signs of spring?



Play in the rain. Don't let rainy days keep you inside! Take a walk under an umbrella and listen to the pitter-patter of raindrops. Or have your youngsters put on rain boots or old sneakers and jump in and over puddles.

Go to parks. Visit playgrounds after school, after dinner, or on weekends. Try to get to different ones (parks, schools, neighborhoods) that feature various kinds of climbing equipment, play structures, or balance beams. *Tip:* Take along balls to bounce on blacktops, Frisbees to throw in grassy areas, or bikes to ride along paths. If the playground is close enough, you can bike there and back. ♡

ACTIVITY CORNER

Roll the dice

This exercise game is as much fun to make as it is to play.

First, have your youngster make a pair of "activity dice." She'll need two large Styrofoam blocks (available at craft stores) or square wooden blocks. Have her cut construction paper to fit each of her "dice" (12 squares total).

Next, ask her to think of six actions (forward rolls, jumping jacks, running to a tree and back). She should write each one on a paper square. On the other six papers, have her write numbers (1–6). She can tape the activities to one die and the numbers to the other.



To play, take turns rolling the dice. Players do the action shown on one die for the number of times shown on the other die (on a roll of "hop on one foot" and "6," you hop 6 times). For a new game, let your child come up with new activities. *Tip:* To increase the activity, renumber the die with higher numbers (15–20). ♡

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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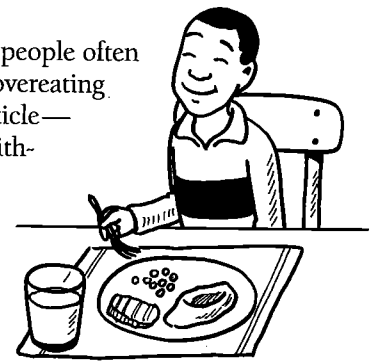
PARENT TO PARENT

"Mindful" eating

I recently read an article that said people often eat "mindlessly," which can lead to overeating and gaining weight. I recognized my son in this article—he eats so fast that I feel like he inhales his food without even knowing what he has eaten!

I asked my aunt, who works in a school cafeteria, for advice. She suggested that we make it a habit at mealtime to slow down and talk about what we're eating. She said I should discuss the ingredients I used and ask everyone to describe what they taste. A good trick is to close your eyes while chewing so you can concentrate on the textures and flavors.

My aunt also said to make sure we don't eat with the television on, as then we're focusing on the show rather than on the food. I'm hoping that eating "mindfully" will slow my son down—and help him realize when he's full so that he doesn't overeat. ♡

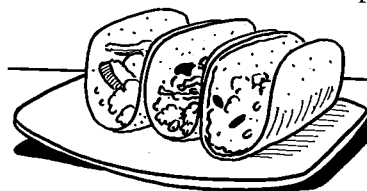


IN THE KITCHEN

Taco nights

For an easy meal that combines protein and vegetables, consider tacos. Try fillings like these, and spoon them into corn, whole-wheat, or multigrain tortillas.

Fish. Mix together 1 can salmon (drained), 1 can black beans (rinsed, drained), 1 cup salsa, ½ avocado (diced), and a handful of grape tomatoes (cut in half).



Beef. Brown lean ground beef in a skillet, and drain. Mix in low-sodium taco seasoning and salsa to taste. Serve with shredded lettuce, diced tomatoes, and shredded low-fat cheddar cheese.

Roasted vegetables. Spread vegetable pieces (cauliflower, zucchini, bell pepper) on a cookie sheet. Drizzle lightly with olive oil, and bake at 350° until soft, 20–30 minutes. Add feta cheese and a spoonful of guacamole. ♡