

Nutrition Nuggets

Food and Fitness for a Healthy Child

February 2013

Towns County Schools

Cindi Dean, Director

BEST BITES



Egg dog

For a healthy meal in a bun, try this clever spin on scrambled eggs. Sauté diced vegetables (red pepper, onions, and potatoes, for example) until tender. Whisk eggs with fat-free milk, and add to the vegetables. Stir quickly until the eggs are set. Place in a whole-wheat hot dog bun, and drizzle on tomato salsa.

Act out the weather

What's the weather outside? Let your child show you, instead of telling you,



with this active idea. Have her look outside and then "become" the weather. She might whirl

around fast like the wind, stomp her feet and pound her arms for thunder, or dance with her arms outstretched on a sunny day.

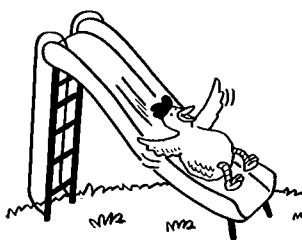
DID YOU KNOW?

One way to learn if your youngster is at a healthy weight is to determine his BMI (body mass index). At his next checkup, the doctor can tell you the number and explain how it fits in with your youngster's growth pattern. That's also a good time to discuss his eating and exercise habits.

Just for fun

Q: Why did the chicken cross the playground?

A: To get to the other slide!



Healthier fast food



For many busy families, fast food can be a fact of life. If that's the case in your house, try to limit it to every now and then. And when you do get fast food, help your youngster make better choices with these ideas.

Give options

Suggest several healthier items, and ask your child to choose among them. For instance, you might suggest a plain hamburger, a grilled chicken sandwich, or a yogurt parfait. At a sub shop, you could offer the chicken breast, ham, or veggie sandwich. Then, ask if she wants water or milk (but don't mention soda).

Talk about toppings

Even the healthiest sandwich or salad can be derailed by high-fat or high-sodium toppings. Encourage your child to ask for "light" (reduced-calorie) cheese and to skip mayonnaise and "special sauces." On the other hand, let her add all the fresh vegetables she wants.



Make it whole

Most fast food and sandwich shops offer healthier bread these days, so use the opportunity to get in a serving of whole grains. Order your child's sandwich on whole-wheat or whole-grain bread or rolls.

Add healthy sides

Skip the fries, and go for the carrot sticks and apple slices instead. If you're bringing the food home, you could microwave frozen green beans or peas and cut up a cantaloupe or a pineapple to serve on the side. That will add important nutrients to any fast-food meal. ♥

Feeling good about sports

Participating in sports can build your child up ... or drag him down. Make athletics a positive experience for your youngster with these strategies:

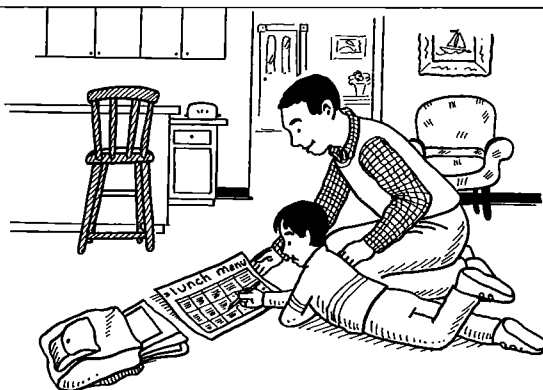
- Keep games in perspective. At this age, sports should be about having fun and developing skills. Ask about his favorite part of practice or the most interesting play in the game, rather than focusing on his performance or the score.
- Encourage him to set goals—but make sure the goals are realistic. He might aim to touch the ball three times during a game or to try a move that he's been working on.
- Avoid comments about your youngster's size or body. Concentrate on the friends he is making, the places he is playing, and the effort he is putting forth ("I love how you tried to get the rebound"). ♥



Cafeteria plan

Why should your child buy school meals? Cafeteria meals are healthier than ever because of new national nutrition standards. Plus, if he gets lunch at school, you can knock “pack lunch” off your to-do list! Consider these three suggestions.

1. Go over the school menu together. He could circle his favorite items and decide what he will put on his tray the next day. Talk up the menu items (“The pork burrito sounds really good!”). If you’re excited about the choices, he’s likely to share your excitement.



2. Discuss what he eats at school. What does he like best? What does he throw in the trash? You might suggest that he write to the cafeteria manager to tell her about his favorite meals. He could also mention what he doesn’t like and make recommendations for new foods to serve.

3. Join your youngster in the cafeteria. Buy a school lunch, too, and be enthusiastic about what you’re eating. *Note:* If you can’t take time off work, perhaps a grandparent or other relative could stop by for lunch with your child sometime. ♥



PARENT TO PARENT Rewards for eating vegetables?

Some of my friends give their children stickers or promise them dessert if they eat their vegetables. I didn’t know whether this was a good idea, so I asked my neighbor Kathy, who is a dietitian.

Kathy said rewards would get my kids to eat vegetables in the short term, but probably not in the long term.

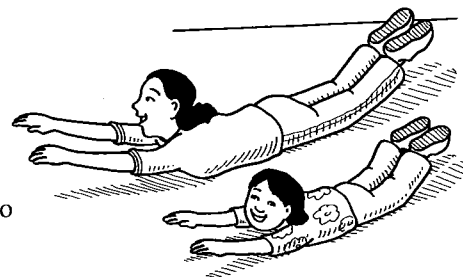


“The goal is to get them to *like* the vegetables, not just to eat them now,” she told me. Also, she said, if you give them cookies as a reward, you’re teaching them to value sweets over vegetables.

Her advice? Serve vegetables matter-of-factly as part of each meal. Set an expectation that the kids taste them, but if they don’t, try not to make a big deal about it. And most of all, she said, don’t give up. I was shocked when she told me it can take 14, 16, or even 20 tries before a child begins liking a new food! ♥

ACTIVITY CORNER Exercise = fun

When children are young, exercise isn’t exercise—it’s just plain fun! Try these ideas for putting more physical activity into your youngster’s day.



Superman

Lie on your tummy with your arms straight out in front of you (as if you’re flying). Lift your arms and legs off the ground at the same time, and hold for five seconds. Put your arms and legs back down. “Fly” 10 more times.

Bubble jumping jacks

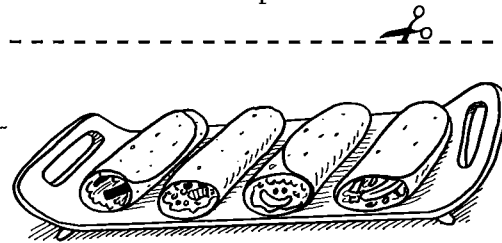
Have your child do jumping jacks as you blow bubbles toward her. How many bubbles can she catch as she jumps? Switch, and let her blow the bubbles as you do jumping jacks.

Freeze dance

Play music, and dance up a storm. When you stop the music, everyone freezes. Hold your poses for 10 seconds, and start the music back up. ♥

IN THE KITCHEN It’s a wrap

Start with a whole-grain tortilla, add healthy ingredients, and roll it all up into a handheld meal or snack. Here are recipes for wraps that are sure to be a hit with your family.



Rainbow. Chop vegetables of various colors (tomatoes, carrots, yellow squash, green pepper). Spread a thin layer of hummus on a tortilla, and add the vegetables in rows by color.

Greek. Cover a tortilla with tzaziki (yogurt-cucumber dip) or Greek yogurt. Top with cooked beef or lamb, chopped cucumbers, chopped onions, shredded lettuce, and feta cheese.

PB&B. Spread reduced-fat peanut butter on a tortilla. Layer on sliced bananas and granola, and drizzle honey on top.

Chicken. Spread a tortilla with a thin layer of pesto. Add cooked chicken, sun-dried tomatoes (not packed in oil), and spinach leaves.

Tip: Leftover meat and vegetables are perfect for wraps. Be creative with last night’s dinner! ♥

OUR PURPOSE
 To provide busy parents with practical ways to promote healthy nutrition and physical activity for their children.
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 128 N. Royal Avenue • Front Royal, VA 22630
 540-636-4280 • rfcustomer@wolterskluwer.com
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