

Nutrition Nuggets

Food and Fitness for a Healthy Child

February 2018

Coal City Community Unit School District
Food Service Department

BEST BITES

Find the right milk

Milk alternatives, such as soy, almond, rice, and coconut milk, are widely available today. That's good news for youngsters who can't have dairy. When choosing non-dairy milk, look for unsweetened varieties that are fortified with calcium and vitamin D.

DID YOU KNOW?

Jumping rope builds bone density, improves heart health, boosts balance and motor coordination, and burns calories. Help your child find a book of jump rope rhymes or games at the library or online. Then, try some together, or encourage her to teach them to her friends.



Thrifty kitchen supplies

Kitchen tools and appliances can be expensive. Consider taking your youngster with you to thrift shops and garage sales to stock up on cooking gadgets. This shows him the value of budget-friendly shopping. Good bets for used items include loaf pans, measuring cups, pots, and blenders.

Just for fun

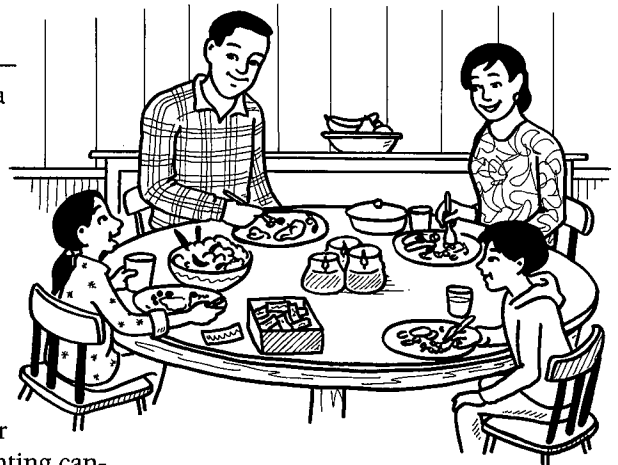
Q: What did one pretzel say to the other pretzel?

A: "Let's twist!"



Connecting over family meals

Gathering for a meal is about more than just eating—it's also about connecting as a family. Research shows that families who share meals tend to eat healthier foods. Here are ways to encourage together time around the kitchen table.



Eat by candlelight

Eating slowly gives your child's brain time to tell her stomach it's full, reducing her chance of overeating. Try lighting candles to create a relaxed atmosphere—this can encourage everyone to slow down and savor the meal. Plus, your child will feel excited that dinnertime seems "fancy."

Create a conversation box

Everyone will look forward to meals with this idea. Together, think of questions like "If you could travel through time, what decade would you visit?" or "What would happen if kids and parents could trade places for a day?" Let your youngster write the conversation starters on slips

of paper and put them in an empty box. During a meal, she can pull out a question to spark an interesting discussion.

Be flexible

Meals can be at different times of day or in different places. The key is to work with your family's schedule—and even add a touch of fun. One evening, you might eat on a picnic blanket on the living room floor. If everyone can't be home for dinner, have a family breakfast. On warmer days, eat on your patio or at a picnic table at the park. ♥

Bento box lunches

A *bento box* is a container with different foods in individual compartments. Many Japanese children use them for school lunch. Try the bento box approach for a weekend lunch tradition:



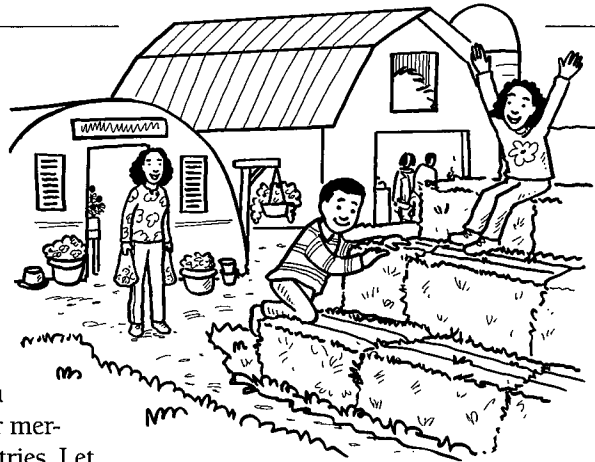
- What youngster wouldn't love cheese "stars," lean turkey "hearts," or melon "basketballs"? Use cookie cutters or other kitchen tools to cut food into fun shapes. Then, place the shapes in ramekins or small food-storage containers arranged on a plate.

- Turn a small ice cube tray into a bento box by putting bite-sized foods into its sections. Your child might fill them with chopped hard-boiled egg, pineapple chunks, and green beans. Or he may like leftover grilled chicken cubes, whole-wheat crackers, grapes, and edamame. ♥

Take a healthy field trip

Nothing beats hands-on learning to spark your youngster's interest in nutritious foods and physical activity. A great way to do this? Plan healthy adventures like these.

Explore food stores. Check out new-to-you health food shops, locally owned markets, or merchants specializing in foods from other countries. Let your child pick out something your regular store doesn't carry, like a loaf of freshly baked bread or an unfamiliar spice blend.

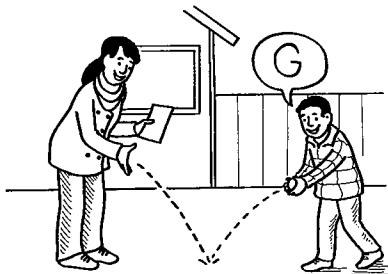


Try a gym. Many community centers, YMCAs, gyms, and rec centers offer free day passes or trial classes. Call around to find one. You and your youngster could swim, play tennis, or perhaps attend a parent-child class like yoga or karate.

Visit a farm. Search online for nearby farms and farmers' markets that are open in winter. Your child can choose fresh local vegetables to sample or to add to a dinnertime salad. A farm tour might also allow him to get exercise by climbing hay bales or rope ladders. ♡

ACTIVITY CORNER Bounce and spell

Put an active twist on your child's next spelling test study session. Get his word list and a tennis ball, then find a space indoors or go outside to play a few rounds of Spelling Bee Bounce.



Stand about 6–12 feet from your youngster, say a word from his list, and bounce the ball to him. As he says each letter, he bounces the ball to you and then you bounce it back to him. If he gets a letter wrong, say, "Oops, try again!" and he starts the word over.

Get creative in this game. He could spin around before bouncing the ball, or he could pretend to shoot it to you like a basketball free-throw.

Before you know it, he'll have mastered his entire spelling list—and gotten exercise along the way! ♡



Q&A Bedtime snacks

Q: My daughter always wants a snack before she goes to bed. What should I give her?

A: A bedtime snack can help stave off hunger until morning, especially if your family eats dinner on the early side.

The recommendations for bedtime snacks are the same as those for snacks your child eats any time of day: Stick to small portions, limit sugar, and choose proteins and whole grains.

Good options include oatmeal, whole-wheat toast topped with a sliced banana, or whole-grain pita pockets stuffed with hummus and shredded carrots. On the other hand, you'll want your youngster to stay away from less healthy items like cookies, cupcakes, and chips.

Tip: Avoid giving your child a snack in the hour before bedtime, since digesting food can make it harder for her to fall asleep. ♡



IN THE KITCHEN Kid favorites: Baked, not fried

Chicken nuggets and french fries are popular with children—and they can be nutritious if they're not actually fried. Rethink these favorites with the following healthy twists.

Chicken nuggets

Cut $\frac{1}{2}$ lb. boneless, skinless chicken breasts into bite-sized pieces, and brush lightly with olive oil. In a bowl, mix $\frac{1}{2}$ cup whole-wheat bread crumbs, 2 tbsp. grated Parmesan cheese, and 1 tsp. Italian seasoning. Roll chicken in mixture to coat. Cook on a lightly



greased baking sheet at 425° for 12–15 minutes, flipping halfway through, until chicken is fully cooked.

French fries

Cut 3 medium russet potatoes into strips. Lightly coat two baking sheets with cooking spray. In a bowl, combine potatoes with 2 tbsp. olive oil, 1 tsp. chili powder (optional), $\frac{1}{2}$ tsp. salt, and $\frac{1}{4}$ tsp. pepper. Arrange on baking sheets, and place in a 400° oven for 30 minutes (turning over after 15 minutes) or until crispy. Spread fries on a paper towel-lined plate to soak up excess oil. ♡

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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Healthy Ideas for Middle and High School Students

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FAST TAKES

The scoop on dried fruit

Raisins, dried apricots, and banana chips have many of the same nutrients as fresh fruit, especially fiber. However, they're high in natural sugar, so your tween should choose packages with no added sugar and stick to the recommended serving size. In addition to eating a small handful, he might sprinkle dried fruit on a salad or stir into yogurt or oatmeal.



Breathe easy

When your teen works out, it's important for her to breathe correctly. Holding her breath during strength training (using free weights or her body weight) can cause dizziness and nausea. To be sure she gets plenty of oxygen, encourage her to *exhale* while lifting a weight and *inhale* as she lowers it.

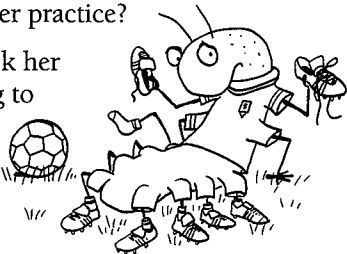
Did You Know?

It's likely that two children in every classroom have a food allergy. Even if your tween is not one of them, he can help others by not sharing food in school and by following guidelines about what team snacks he may bring. *Note:* The most common allergies are to milk, eggs, peanuts, tree nuts, wheat, soy, and shellfish.

Just for fun

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

A: It took her too long to tie her shoes.



Handling picky eaters

If you have a picky eater at home, you're not alone! Use these strategies to help your tween or teen become a more adventurous—and healthier—eater.

Ease into it

A plate piled high with greens may overwhelm your veggie-avoiding tween. Offer small portions of new foods to encourage her to try them with no pressure. For instance, set up a family salad bar, and encourage everyone to take small amounts of different vegetables.

Limit snacks

If cookies, chips, and candy are in the house, your teen may fill up on them before or after meals rather than eat what you cook. Consider limiting unhealthy snacks so she'll be more open to sampling what's served at mealtimes.

Try, try again

Your child might not like broiled fish the first time she tastes it. Or the fifth!



In fact, it can take as many as 15 tries to get your tween to accept a new food. Keep exposing her to new things. Perhaps serve it in a different way—put fish into tacos and top with fruit salsa, or add it to a rice bowl.

Be a good role model

Let your tween see you enjoying the healthy foods you want her to eat. Studies show that kids are more likely to eat what their parents or caregivers have. She might have spinach or lentils if *you* do! ●

How to choose a team sport

Team sports can teach your tween the value of healthy competition and the power of working together. Share these ways to help him find one that's right for him:

- Start with a game he enjoys—he'll be more likely to stick with it. Baseball may be a good fit if he's always playing catch in the backyard or watching baseball games on TV.
- Choose a sport that matches his talents. If it's easy for him to jump high or run fast, he might consider track and field or basketball. Or if he's like a fish in water, maybe he'll join the swim team. ●



Learn while you earn

With a food-related job, your teen could bring home more than just a paycheck. It can also be a great way to build food knowledge and even be active on the job. Have him consider these positions.

Grocery stock clerk. Your child will learn the names of the foods he shelves. He may stock produce like starfruit and kohlrabi or sort cheese like gruyere and gorgonzola in the dairy aisle. At home,



he could look up recipes to try that include interesting or unusual foods he discovers.

Cashier. Encourage your teenager to pay attention to how much different foods cost, what coupons customers use, and what is on sale each week. He could help you make a grocery list based on coupons and sales—this will teach him to be a smart shopper.

Food server. Your teen will get lots of ideas about how food can be prepared and presented, and he may even get to sample new menu items. For instance, the cook might brush pork chops with a maple-mustard glaze or use tomato and cucumber salad as a garnish. Ask him to make a meal at home that's inspired by one from his restaurant. ♡

ACTIVITY CORNER



Scarf workouts

A scarf isn't just for keeping your neck warm in winter—your tween can use it to exercise, too! Suggest these routines for her to try.

● **Do figure eights.** With legs shoulder-width apart, squat, and move a scarf in a figure-eight pattern. Start with it in your right hand, move it between your legs and behind your left knee, and grab it with your left hand. Now pass it behind your right knee, and take it with your right hand. Repeat 5 times, then reverse directions.

● **Toss and touch.** Build coordination and speed as you race against yourself.

Throw a lightweight scarf in the air, and see how many times you can clap your hands before it falls back down. Catch it, and try again. Other motions to try while the scarf falls: Spin in a circle, touch your toes, or even turn a cartwheel! ♡



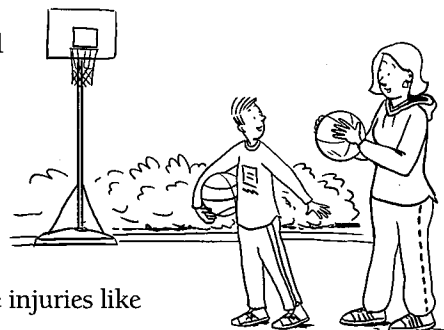
PARENT TO PARENT

Don't overdo it!

I was happy when my son Mason started exercising. But when he began running and lifting weights twice a day, I worried that he was becoming obsessed with it.

Together, we looked up exercise recommendations for 13-year-old boys and found out that he needs about an hour of physical activity a day. We also read that too much exercise can cause overuse injuries like muscle tears or even stress fractures.

Mason didn't like the idea of getting hurt and not being able to work out. Now he has eased up and is exercising once a day most of the time. He's satisfied because he feels himself getting stronger, and I feel better, too. ♡



In the Kitchen

Think outside the pizza box

Why stick with pepperoni and mozzarella when there are so many tasty and nutritious pizza toppings out there? Try these twists.

Barbecue chicken

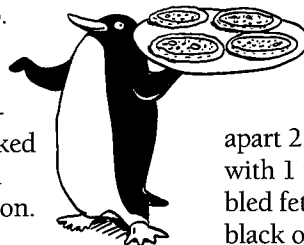
Preheat oven to 375°. Place 4 sandwich thins on a baking sheet, and brush each with ½ tsp. low-sodium barbecue sauce. Top with 2 tsp. shredded pepper-jack cheese, ¼ cup cooked shredded chicken, and 1 tsp. chopped red onion. Bake 10 minutes.

Bell pepper and cheese

Preheat oven to 450°. Press whole-grain store-bought pizza dough into a round nonstick baking sheet. Drizzle with 1 tbsp. olive oil. Sprinkle with ½ tsp. garlic powder, and add 1 sliced green bell pepper, ¼ cup shredded cheddar cheese, and ½ tsp. black pepper. Bake 12–15 minutes.

Mediterranean pita

Preheat oven to 450°. Split apart 2 whole-grain pitas. Top each half with 1 tbsp. pizza sauce, 2 tbsp. crumbled feta cheese, and 1 tbsp. halved black olives. Bake 12–15 minutes. ♡



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