

Nutrition Nuggets

Food and Fitness for a Healthy Child

March 2019



Stonington Public Schools Nutrition Services
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BEST BITES

Colorful stir-fries

Add variety to your youngster's diet by using different combinations of vegetables in stir-fries. Try bok choy with red



cabbage and carrots, or zucchini with green

beans and red bell pepper. He might discover new veggies he enjoys. *Note:* For children who don't like their food "mixed up," you could stir-fry each vegetable separately.

Let's walk to the barbershop

To increase your child's daily steps, walk together wherever possible. Bring her along when you get a haircut, shop at the corner store, or go to the bank. Also, take the stairs rather than the elevator or escalator. *Tip:* When you do drive, park far from the entrance for a longer walk.

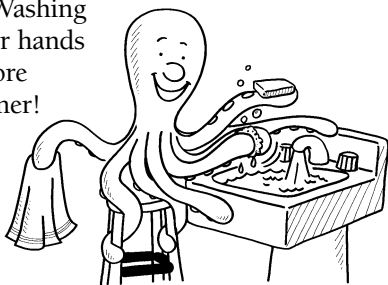
DID YOU KNOW?

Many supermarket chains now have mobile apps that can help you save money on groceries. Find out which stores in your area offer this, and consider downloading an app. You may find coupons and discounts in addition to advertised sales.

Just for fun

Q: What's the worst thing about being an octopus?

A: Washing your hands before dinner!



Cooking: Mash, pour, measure, and more

Invite your children into the kitchen to help you cook. They'll learn about healthy eating, cooking techniques, and meal planning.

Experiment away

Fish-shaped crackers instead of croutons in salad? A mashed-potato-and-pea parfait? Why not! Provide healthy ingredients, then step back and let your youngsters be creative. They'll become comfortable in the kitchen, and they'll be more likely to eat food they make themselves. *Idea:* Suggest that they write and illustrate their recipes on index cards.

Put on a show

Pretend you're a famous chef on a cooking show and your children are the audience. Demonstrate how to use a salad spinner or a whisk. ("I'm putting the lid on this spinner. Now I'm rotating the handle, and voila! It spins the water out of the lettuce.") Then, let your youngsters take



turns being the celebrity chef and explaining techniques.

Use teamwork

Have each person pick a food group (vegetables, fruits, grains, protein, dairy) and choose an ingredient from that group. Then, work together to make a meal that incorporates everything. Say you pick sweet potato, apple, whole-wheat tortillas, black beans, and cheese. Perhaps you'll make sweet potato-bean-cheese enchiladas with a side of apple slices. ♥

March: Lion or lamb?

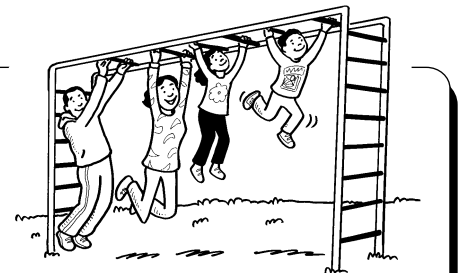
As the saying goes, "March comes in like a lion and goes out like a lamb." Stay active regardless of the weather with these suggestions.

On a windy day...

Blow up a balloon, and go outdoors for a game of "windball." Set the balloon in the middle of the yard, and chase it around as the wind blows it. After someone catches it, he bats it away with his hand to start the game again. The first player to catch the balloon five times wins.

On a calm day...

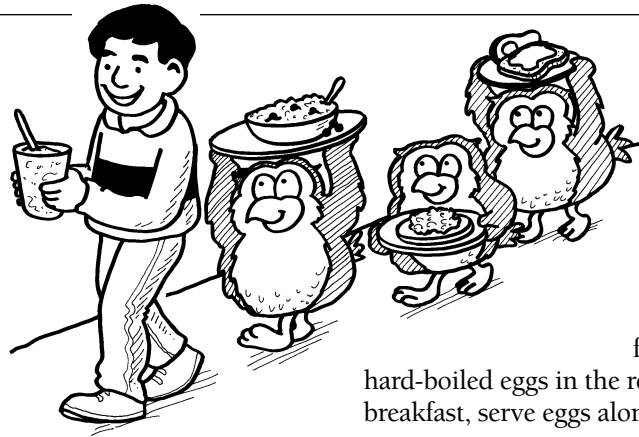
Head to a playground for a game of follow the leader—just like little lambs. Your child might have your family tiptoe on a balance beam, swing across the monkey bars, climb a ladder, and go down a twisty slide. ♥



Breakfasts that boost brainpower

A healthy breakfast fuels your child's brain on test day—and every day. Here are four simple ways to provide the carbohydrate-fat-protein combo that promotes concentration, memory, and thinking.

1. Leafy greens. Toss a few leaves of spinach, kale, or chard into the blender when you make your youngster a fruit smoothie. Serve alongside a whole-wheat bagel or English muffin topped with fat-free cream cheese.



2. Berries. Let your child stir blueberries, raspberries, or strawberries into his oatmeal or Greek yogurt for a smart start.

3. Eggs. Top a whole-grain waffle with scrambled eggs, and have your youngster fold it like a taco. Or keep

hard-boiled eggs in the refrigerator. For a complete breakfast, serve eggs alongside cereal and a banana.

4. Avocados. The good fat in avocados promotes healthy brain development. Your child can mash half of an avocado, spread it on whole-wheat toast, and sprinkle on red pepper flakes if he likes “heat.”



PARENT TO PARENT Cut back on processed foods

I know that many packaged snacks and frozen dinners have too much sugar, salt, and fat, but they're so convenient! I mentioned this to the cafeteria manager at my son Isaiah's school, and she had good advice.

She suggested we look for foods that are close to what you'd find in nature. Now Isaiah and I use her “test” at the store. I'll ask, “Do apple chips grow on trees?” and he'll say, “No, but apples do!”



Also, we try to buy foods with fewer ingredients, since the cafeteria manager said those tend to be less processed. For example, we've started making “real” versions of frozen entrees. This week, we passed up microwave fettucine alfredo and bought frozen plain broccoli, whole-grain pasta, olive oil, and Parmesan cheese. Dinner took a little longer, but it tasted better, and it was more nutritious.

ACTIVITY CORNER

I'm a runner!

Running is a great whole-body workout for your youngster. Lace up your sneakers, and try these running games.



Run, walk, run

Help your child gradually work up to running longer distances. Take turns choosing a spot (a tree, a building). Run to it, walk for 30 seconds, and pick the next destination. At first, aim for something nearby, like the stop sign at the end of the block. Soon maybe you'll run all the way to her school.

Find the “treasure”

Build speed with this game. Let your child collect 20 small objects (Rubik's Cube, paperweight, tennis ball) in a basket. Head to a nearby field, and scatter the items around, leaving plenty of space to run between them. Now have everyone run to gather the objects, one at a time, and return each to the basket.

IN THE KITCHEN

Shake-a-salad

Fill, shake, and eat. That's the winning formula behind fun-for-you and good-for-you salad shake-ups.

To assemble: Give your child an empty container. Have her fill it with any of these combinations, put the lid on, and shake, shake, shake.

Deli delight. Chunks of left-over deli meat (lean ham, turkey, or roast beef), shredded skim mozzarella cheese, chopped lettuce, grape tomatoes, and low-fat ranch dressing.



Southwest slam. Cooked lean ground beef, chopped lettuce, shredded low-fat cheddar cheese, diced tomatoes, and a sprinkling of low-sodium taco seasoning.

Pasta mix-up. Cooked macaroni, black olives, chopped red pepper, grated Parmesan cheese, and Italian dressing.

Tip: Add something that makes a “shake sound,” such as nuts or baked pita chips, to put even more fun in the shaking.

OUR PURPOSE

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

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