

Nutrition Nuggets

Food and Fitness for a Healthy Child

February 2020

Stonington Public Schools Nutrition Services

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BEST BITES

Put away the salt

Here's an easy way to cut back on the amount of salt your child eats: Don't invite the salt-shaker to the dinner table! If it's out of sight, he won't salt food without thinking. Too much salt can lead to high blood pressure and other health risks. *Idea:* Set out alternatives like lemon pepper and salt-free seasoning blends.

Active fundraisers

Offer to help plan a healthy PTA or PTO fundraiser. Instead of selling candy or other sugary foods, suggest active ways to raise money. Your group might hold a bike-a-thon or a student-teacher kickball tournament, for instance. This will get your youngster and her classmates moving and encourage healthy habits.

DID YOU KNOW?

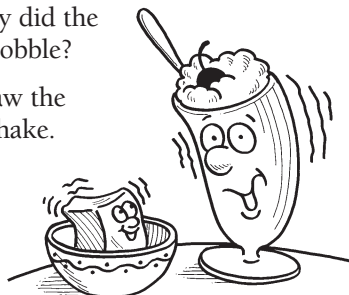
Your child can use science to determine whether an egg is fresh!

Have him put an egg in a glass of cold water. If it's fresh, it will sink. If it floats, it's past its prime. Why? Eggshells have tiny holes that air seeps into over time—the more air an egg has inside, the older it is and the more likely it is to float.

Just for fun

Q: Why did the jelly wobble?

A: It saw the milk shake.



Healthy choices at the store

Turn a trip to the supermarket into a healthy adventure for your child. Use these tips to teach her to make good food choices from the start.

Make a list

Before you head out, plan meals with your youngster. Ask her to name healthy foods to eat this week. Which lean protein (chicken, black beans, fish) would she like for dinner each night? What nutritious snacks should you buy?

Have her write a shopping list that includes her ideas. She'll learn that using a list can keep her focused and cut down on the tendency to toss chips or cookies into the cart.

Read labels

At the store, show your child how to read labels. Then, give her challenges. You might ask her to find a box of crackers with whole wheat as the first ingredient (meaning there's more whole wheat than anything else)



or the yogurt with the least amount of sugar per serving.

Discover new foods

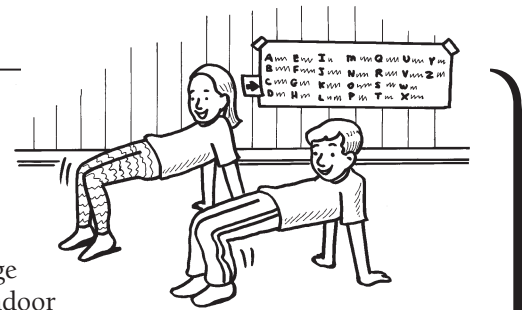
Work together to find a healthy new food to try. In the produce section, she might spot parsnips or rutabagas, for example. Check out the international aisle, which may have tahini (sesame seed paste) or brown rice noodles. Let her put the new food in the cart, and at home, research ways to include it in a meal. ♥

Alphabet fitness

Get fit from A to Z! With this suggestion, your youngster will always have something active to do.

First, help your child make a poster of fitness options, one for each letter of the alphabet. Encourage him to include a variety of ideas—indoor and outdoor, or ones he can do alone or with other people. *Examples:* A = acrobatics, B = beach ball toss.

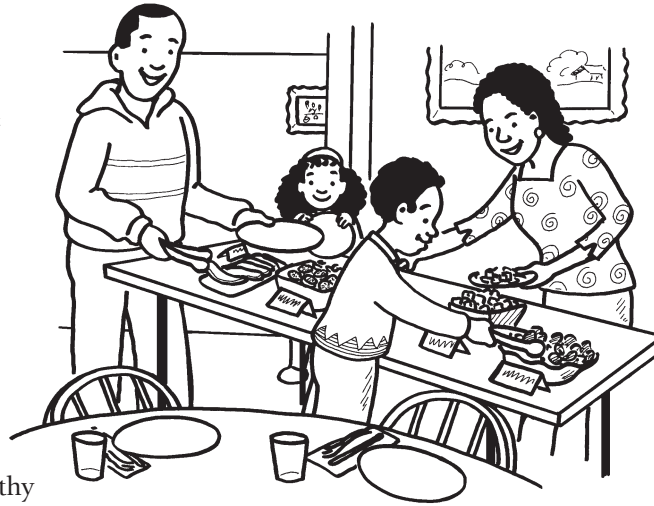
Now put a set of letter tiles or magnetic letters in a bag or bowl. Your youngster can pull out a letter anytime and do the matching activity. "It's C. Let's have a crab-walk race!" ♥



Salad days

Salads make it easy to get more vegetables into your youngster's diet. Try these kid-friendly strategies that will have your child asking, "More salad, please!"

Favorites first. Start with ingredients your youngster likes, such as croutons, cheddar cheese cubes, and broccoli crowns. Then, let him mix in greens like romaine or arugula. Finally, he could drizzle on a healthy dressing like ranch made with yogurt.



Give it a twist. Who says you have to eat salad with a fork? Have your child fill his plate with finger foods, such as baby kale leaves, red pepper spears, green beans, and cucumber slices. Or he might make a "deconstructed" salad by putting each ingredient in a separate section of his plate.

Create a buffet. Ask your youngster to help you set up a salad bar for dinner. He could choose fun containers for ingredients and add signs. *Examples:*

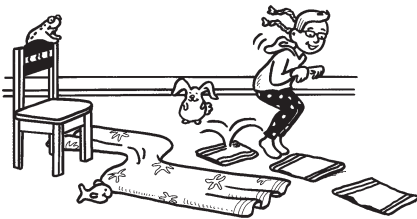
"Superhero Spinach," "Tasty Turkey." Encourage him to put veggies on half his plate, then add cheese for calcium, a whole grain (cooked pasta wheels or farro), and protein (hard-boiled egg slices, lean ham). ♥

ACTIVITY CORNER

A "forest" obstacle course

Trekking through a forest is great exercise—and so is navigating this creative indoor version. Encourage your child to make and play in an obstacle course disguised as a forest.

1. Set it up. What can she find around the house to make her "forest"? She might use a blue beach towel for a stream, green washcloths for lily pads, blocks for stones, and chairs for trees.



2. Add "creatures." Now your youngster can scatter stuffed animals or magazine pictures of animals throughout.

3. Go exploring! Let your child move through her forest. She can hop across the lily pads, climb the chair, and move like the animals. Maybe she'll swim like a fish or jump like a bunny. ♥

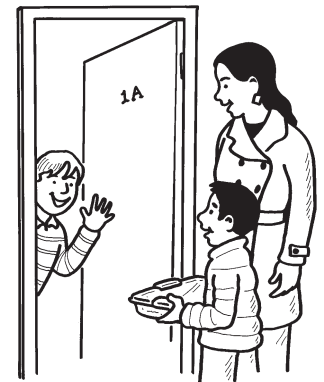
PARENT TO PARENT

Managing diabetes

When my son Logan was diagnosed with Type 2 diabetes, I worried about how he'd manage, especially when I wasn't with him. So we worked with a dietitian to create a healthy eating plan.

The dietitian said Logan doesn't need special foods—just a nutritious diet and plenty of exercise. She also told us to email copies of his care plan to his teachers, the school nurse, the cafeteria manager, and the principal. Now they know when Logan may need a blood sugar check or a snack. If he goes to a friend's house, I send a healthy treat to share and give the parent a list of symptoms that would indicate his blood sugar is dropping or spiking.

Our whole family is working on eating better and being more active. That's making things easier for Logan *and* keeping us all healthier. ♥



IN THE KITCHEN

Four-ingredient meals

Healthy dinners don't need to be complicated. These meals taste great and burst with nutrition—and each one has just four ingredients.

Chicken caprese

Stir together: diced baked chicken, grape tomatoes, marinated mozzarella balls.

Toss with: whole-grain angel hair pasta (cooked, drained).

Quinoa bowl

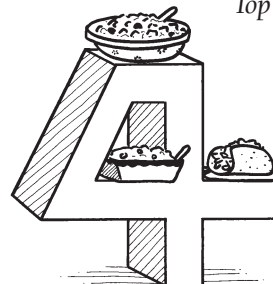
Stir together: cooked quinoa, canned chickpeas (drained and rinsed), sliced black olives.

Top with: plain nonfat yogurt.

Tuna tacos

Stir together: can or pouch of tuna (packed in water, drained), avocado chunks, shredded purple cabbage.

Serve in: whole-wheat tortillas. ♥



OUR PURPOSE

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

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a division of CCH Incorporated
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ISSN 1935-4630