

Nutrition Nuggets™

Food and Fitness for a Healthy Child

North Branch Area School District



BEST BITES

Wash your hands

Want to lower the chance of your child getting sick or spreading germs? Make it a family habit to wash hands regularly—and always before preparing food or eating. Scrub with soap and warm water for at least 20 seconds, about the time it takes to sing the alphabet song.

Balance like a squirrel

Fun fact: Squirrels use their tails for balance as they scurry across branches. For a playful way to work on balance, have your child pretend she's a squirrel. Let her use chalk to draw a line on the sidewalk. She can run along the line, one foot in front of the other. Ask how *she* balances (perhaps with her arms out at her sides).



DID YOU KNOW?

Your youngster could eat a different kind of apple every day for 20 years! That's because apples come in more than 7,500 varieties. Challenge him to count the types at your grocery store or farmers' market. He could keep a list of ones he tries, perhaps putting a star beside his favorites. *Bonus:* They're *all* excellent sources of fiber and good sources of vitamin C.

Just for fun

Q: What has to be broken to be used?

A: An egg.

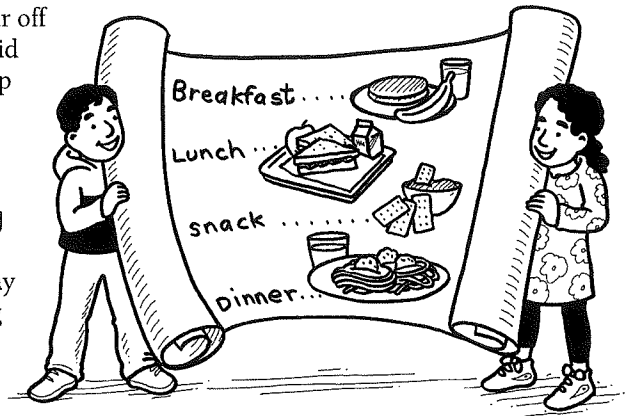


Routines for healthy eating

Starting a new school year off right includes setting up solid routines for eating well. Help your youngster map out a good strategy for each part of her day.

Jump-start the morning

A healthy breakfast prepares your child for a full day of learning. Consider letting her eat breakfast in the school cafeteria. She'll save time and get a balanced meal with whole grains, protein, low-fat dairy, and fruit. *Idea:* Have her make a "breakfast tracker" chart. Every day, she could draw a different-colored star for each food group she ate from.



Boost afternoon energy

Your youngster will want a snack to tide her over until dinnertime—make sure it's a nutritious one! She might pack whole-wheat crackers, hummus, and grapes to munch on at after-school care. Or if she comes right home after school,

she could eat half of a turkey and tomato sandwich with a glass of milk before she tackles homework.

Fuel up at dinner

Try to eat dinner together, even on busy evenings. Fitting dinner prep into your morning routine is one way to make this happen. For example, put chili ingredients into a slow cooker. Another idea is to prepare the night before, perhaps marinating chicken and cutting up vegetables. ●

"Fall" for physical activity

The longer, warmer days of summer are winding down. Use these ideas to keep up your child's physical activity when fall arrives.

● **Be active in school:** Encourage your youngster to wear sneakers every day so he's comfortable playing at recess. He might also join an after-school activity like a running club or a kickball team.

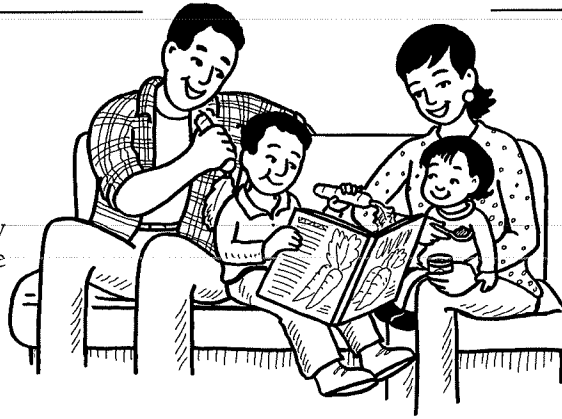
● **Take advantage of daylight:** Let your child play outside right after school or child care. Consider saving chores for after dinner.

● **Dress appropriately:** It's great to play outside year round. In cooler weather, layers are ideal because your youngster can shed them as exercise warms him up. ●



Books that inspire good nutrition

Picture books offer a fun way to drive home messages about healthy eating. They can also encourage picky eaters to be more adventurous. Here are topics, books, and activities for getting started—ask your child's school librarian for more book recommendations.



Topic: Fruits and vegetables

Book picks: *Blueberries for Sal* (Robert McCloskey), *Creepy Carrots!* (Aaron Reynolds)

Activity: Talk about how the characters prepared their fruits and veggies, and brainstorm different ways to serve them in your home. You could make blueberry and cottage cheese “pizzas” on English muffins or put together a carrot-and-raisin salad.

Topic: Picky eaters

Book picks: *Gregory, the Terrible Eater* (Mitchell Sharbat), *The Seven Silly Eaters* (Mary Ann Hoberman)

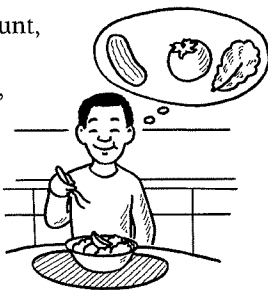
Activity: Ask your youngster to draw a picture of foods that both he and the characters like to eat. Now have him draw a food that they might all want to try! ●

PARENT TO PARENT

Mindful eating

I recently read that “mindless eating” can lead to overeating and weight gain. I recognized my son in this article—sometimes I feel like he inhales his food without even tasting it!

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 a good trick is to close your eyes while chewing so you can concentrate on the textures and flavors.

My aunt also said we should turn off the TV so we focus on our food rather than on a show. 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. ●

ACTIVITY CORNER

Take a hike, family-style!

Hiking is a heart-healthy activity that also strengthens your youngster's (and your) muscles. Try these tips for a successful family adventure:

- Stop by the visitor center or ranger station at a state or national park, or search online for “family-friendly hikes” in your area. Choose a trail that's suited to your child's stamina and ability by considering the distance and the terrain (hilly or flat, rocky or smooth).
- Build in stops to share a healthy snack, rest, and appreciate nature. Together, make a list of things to spot (moss growing on a rock, a red bird, a furry animal, a yellow flower). Let your youngster bring a magnifying glass for a close-up look at bugs and plants. Or have her pack a sketchpad and crayons so she can create crayon rubbings of tree bark or draw the view from scenic overlooks. ●



IN THE KITCHEN

Stuffed veggies

With these nutritious recipes, your youngster can have her “bowl” and eat it, too.

Chicken-salad tomatoes

Combine 3 cups cooked, shredded chicken with $\frac{1}{4}$ cup chopped celery and 3 tbsp. light mayonnaise. Cut 3 large tomatoes in half, and remove the insides. Divide the chicken salad into the tomato halves.

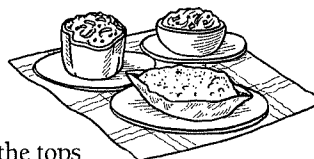
Cheeseburger peppers

Cook 1 lb. lean ground turkey. Drain fat, and stir in $\frac{1}{4}$ cup diced onions. Slice off the tops of 3 bell peppers, and remove the seeds.

Fill with the turkey mixture, and top each pepper with 2 tbsp. shredded cheddar. Bake at 350° for 25 minutes.

Apple-cinnamon sweet potatoes

Pierce 4 sweet potatoes a few times with a fork, and bake at 425° for 45 minutes. Cut the potatoes in half. Scoop out the insides, and mash them in a bowl with 1 apple (peeled and chopped), 1 tbsp. butter, 1 tbsp. brown sugar, and $\frac{1}{4}$ tsp. cinnamon. Spoon into each potato half. ●



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