

Nutrition Nuggets™

Food and Fitness for a Healthy Child

North Branch Area School District

BEST BITES

Fitness forecast

This time of year, the weather can change from day to day—cold to warm, snowy to clear. Have your child look at the weather forecast to see which days will be best for playing outside this week. Then, she could mark the calendar with ideas. (“Monday: Go to the playground.” “Tuesday: Have a long-jump contest in the basement.”)



DID YOU KNOW?

Healthy eating is linked to success in school. In fact, students who eat nutritiously have better attendance, fewer visits to the school nurse, and higher test scores. To help your youngster eat a healthier diet, stock your refrigerator and pantry with nutritious foods, and try not to buy junk food.

Use open gyms

Open gym times offer a great opportunity for your child to shoot hoops, play volleyball, or run around with his friends and family. Check to see if your youngster’s school gym, or a nearby middle or high school gym, is open to families after school hours. Or look into open gym hours at your local community center. *Note:* Parental supervision may be required.

Just for fun

Q: What does a snail say when it’s riding on a turtle’s back?

A: “Whee!”

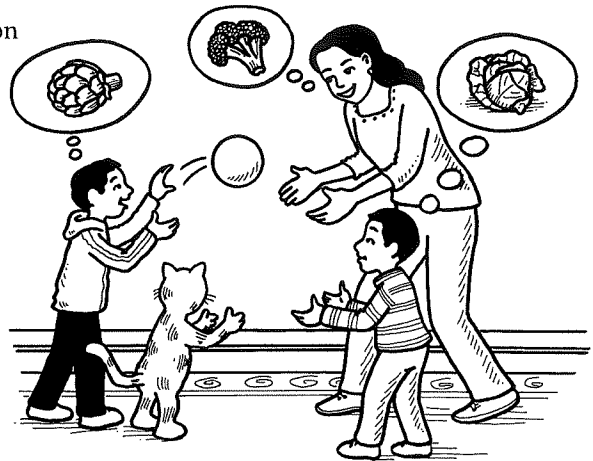


Let’s play nutrition!

March is National Nutrition Month. Celebrate by building nutrition knowledge with these fun activities. When your child knows more about healthy foods, he’ll be more likely to choose them for meals and snacks.

Name a food

Quick, think of a healthy food! In this fast-paced game, take turns coming up with a nutritious food—in ABC order—for breakfast, lunch, or dinner. The first player holds a ball and says, “I love _____ (artichokes) for breakfast.” He tosses the ball to the next person, who says, “I love _____ (broccoli) for lunch.” Keep going, and see how many you can name. Then, choose a few of the foods to eat this week.



Decorate your posters, and display them for everyday reminders of ways to stay healthy.

Know the group

Focus on food groups with this twist on bingo. Each player makes a 5 x 5 bingo card with these headings: Fruits, Vegetables, Grains, Protein, and Dairy. Next, he writes a matching food in each column and also writes the words on separate slips of paper. Give all the slips to a “caller,” who mixes them up and reads them out, one by one (toss out any duplicates). If he calls an item on your board, mark it. The first one with five across, down, or diagonally yells “Bingo” to win. 🍀

Design posters

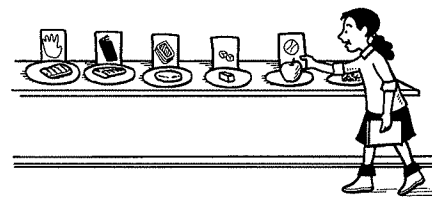
Showcase good nutrition with homemade posters. First, brainstorm healthy eating tips, and come up with fun slogans to use. You could suggest “Start your engines with breakfast!” and your youngster might say, “Milk is the best!”

Picturing portions

Overeating often comes down to portion sizes: They’re just too big. Share this handy list to help your youngster eyeball healthy portion sizes:

- 1 serving of meat or chicken = palm of your hand
- 1 serving of fish = checkbook
- 1 hamburger (no bun) or meatloaf slice = deck of cards
- 1 oz. cheese = your thumb
- ½ cup cooked rice = cupcake wrapper

- 2 tbsp. peanut butter = Ping-Pong ball
- ¼ cup nuts = golf ball
- 1 serving of cooked pasta = ½ baseball
- 1 baked potato = computer mouse 🖱️



H₂O to the rescue

One of the healthiest and most inexpensive sources of good nutrition is as close as your kitchen sink. Encourage your youngster to drink water all day long with these ideas.

Keep a log. Hang a small whiteboard on your refrigerator. Write each family member's name down the left side. Every time someone drinks a glass of water, she draws a glass next to her name. *Note:* Have your child announce the results each evening—she'll practice reading graphs and interpreting data.



Add flavor. Make your own “fruit punch” by squeezing an orange into a glass of water and floating an orange slice on top. Or drop in a strawberry one day and a cucumber slice the next. *Try this:* Each day, fill a pitcher with water and add fruit. Your youngster will be excited to see what today's water flavor is!

Be a role model. Let your child see you drinking water. Take it along when you go out together, and keep a glass of water beside you when you work, pay bills, or read. *Tip:* Try not to drink soda around her—research shows that children of soda drinkers are much more likely to drink it regularly. ♥

Q&A No meat? What now?



Q: I can't believe it—my 10-year-old daughter has decided to be a vegetarian. We're all meat eaters, and I don't know how to cook for her or make sure she gets the protein she needs. Help!

A: Don't despair. There are easy—and nutritious—ways to adjust family meals to accommodate your child's choice.



Try serving meat and poultry on the side. For a stir-fry, you could cook vegetables in one skillet and chicken in another. Or put the meatballs in a separate bowl when you're having spaghetti. Then, your child might substitute other proteins like beans, eggs, veggie burgers, or soy “nuggets.” She could also get protein from whole grains, nuts, and milk.

And here's something good to know: A balanced vegetarian diet can be every bit as healthy as a meat eater's diet. In fact, vegetarians typically eat less saturated fat and more fruits, vegetables, and fiber—and they're less likely to be overweight. ♥

ACTIVITY CORNER

Enjoy nature walks

Walking outside is a wonderful way to combine physical activity, family bonding, and learning about nature. Try these suggestions.



Make my name

Have your youngster collect items from the ground that he could use to spell his name. He may find leaves, pine needles, pebbles, sticks, or feathers. Then, he can arrange them into the letters of his name on a sidewalk or on grass. Or he might glue them onto paper and hang up his “nature name.”

Take a photo safari

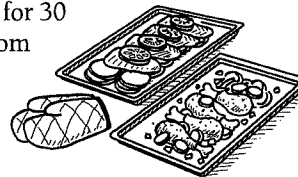
Let your child use a digital camera or your phone to snap pictures. He could focus on landscapes, trees, birds, insects, or animals. Make prints of his photos, and suggest that he turn them into a collage or a book. *Idea:* Have him label the pictures using a field guide from the library or websites to identify objects or animals he doesn't know. ♥

IN THE KITCHEN

Sheet-pan meals

For easy weeknight dinners, consider sheet-pan entrees. Here are two recipes.

Fish & potatoes. Slice 2 russet potatoes, and toss with 1 tbsp. olive oil, $\frac{1}{4}$ tsp. salt, and $\frac{1}{4}$ tsp. pepper. Cover a sheet pan with parchment paper, and arrange the potatoes in overlapping slices. Roast at 425° for 30 minutes. Remove from the oven, and top with 4 fish fillets (cod, salmon) and 4 lemon



slices. Roast 10–15 minutes more, until the fish flakes easily with a fork.

Citrus chicken. In a bowl, combine 3 lbs. chicken drumsticks or thighs with 4 sliced carrots and 1 chopped onion. Salt and pepper lightly. Spread on a baking sheet, and roast at 475° for about 30 minutes, until chicken is cooked through and vegetables are tender. Whisk together $\frac{2}{3}$ cup orange juice, 3 tbsp. lime juice, 1 tsp. cumin, and $\frac{1}{2}$ tsp. dried oregano, and pour over the dish. ♥

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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