

# Nutrition Nuggets

Food and Fitness for a Healthy Child

North Branch Area School District



## BEST BITES

### Free samples

Borrow an idea from food warehouse and specialty stores: Offer your child “free samples” of the (healthy) foods you’re preparing. When you’re slicing carrots or breaking cauliflower into florets, put some on a small plate or in cupcake liners. Your youngster will enjoy the tiny tastes, and they will whet his appetite for what’s to come.



### Be safe outdoors

As the weather warms up, review outdoor safety tips with your children. They need to use helmets when biking, scootering, or skating. Also, they should wear sneakers or other closed shoes, and they shouldn’t have drawstrings or necklaces dangling. Finally, be sure they apply sunscreen and wear hats, even on cloudy days.

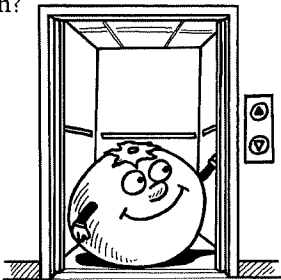
### Recipe math

Invite your child to cook and bake with you, and put her in charge of doubling or halving recipes to fit the number of people you’re serving. She’ll get comfortable with adjusting recipes as she works on multiplication ( $2 \times 1$  lb. pasta = 2 lbs. pasta), division ( $16 \text{ oz.} \div 2 = 8 \text{ oz.}$ ), and fractions ( $2 \times \frac{3}{4}$  cup cheese =  $1\frac{1}{2}$  cups cheese).

### Just for fun

**Q:** What’s round and red and moves up and down?

**A:** A tomato in an elevator!



## Make snacks count

Did you know that frequent snacking is tied to obesity? In fact, today’s kids average nearly three snacks a day and get about a quarter of their daily calories from between-meal eating. Use these strategies to keep your youngster’s snacking under control.



### Add nutrients

Encourage snacks that will contribute to your child’s nutrient intake, rather than her sugar or salt intake. For instance, swap a banana for cookies, sugar snap peas for chips, and fat-free milk for juice. To motivate her to choose healthy snacks, speak her language: Try offering “strong snacks for your muscles” or “smart snacks for your brain.”

### Avoid grazing

Eating all day long makes it hard for your youngster to burn off fat. Together, decide when she’ll snack (perhaps after school and an hour before bed). Then, have her sit down instead of eating on the

run and—most important—keep the television and other electronics off. “Distracted eating” causes kids to eat more, since they’re not paying attention to how much they put in their mouths.

### Watch serving sizes

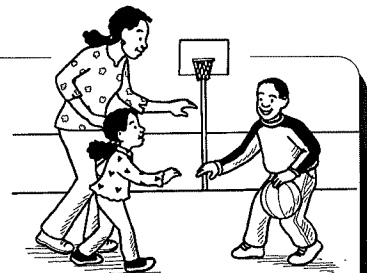
Keep snacks a reasonable size. Pick up little bowls at a discount store, and use them for small servings of vegetable or miso soup, whole-grain cereal, or unsweetened applesauce (sprinkled with cinnamon). Or make your own “snack packs” by putting tangerine sections, a handful of nuts, or grape tomatoes into snack-size baggies. ♥

## Pre-diabetes: A plan

If your child is diagnosed with pre-diabetes, take heart. There are steps you can take to try to prevent him from developing full-blown type 2 diabetes.

1. Be active. Exercise lowers blood glucose levels as well as body fat. He should aim for 60 minutes a day of physical activity.
2. Eat a healthy diet with lots of vegetables, high-fiber foods, and whole grains. Stay away from foods with added sugar.
3. Maintain a healthy weight. Work with a registered dietitian, a nutritionist, or another health professional on ways to shed pounds.

*Note:* Diabetes warning signs include increased thirst, frequent urination, unusual tiredness, and blurry vision. If you notice any of these problems, consult a doctor. ♥



# Eating in different "languages"

Food is a fun—and delicious—way to expose your child to different cultures. These activities will teach him about diversity while he discovers new foods.

**Country to country.** Help your youngster understand how people express their backgrounds through the foods they eat. Ask him what foods he sees at other people's houses that he doesn't eat at home—and what foods you serve that his friends don't have. Let him explore foods at ethnic markets, and bring some home to try.



**Bread = bread = bread.** Call it pita, focaccia, harcha, naan, or tortilla... people in every culture eat some kind of bread. Set a goal of tasting a different kind each week. Your child could keep a bread journal, recording how each type looks, smells, and tastes. He'll learn that bread is a delicious reminder of the cultures that make up our world.

**Try this:** Read *Everybody Cooks Rice* (Norah Dooley), a children's book about a girl who goes from house to house and finds rice being made in different dishes like Chinese stir-fry, Caribbean rice and black-eyed peas, and Indian biryani. Help your youngster use a map to find the countries named, and make the rice recipes from the back of the book. ●



## PARENT TO PARENT

### Hit the track

My neighbor recently mentioned that he runs on the high school track when it's not being used. I realized that would be a great place for my son Joey and me to take up running.

At first we alternated walking and running—walking 3 minutes and running for 1 minute once around the track. After a week, we switched to 2 minutes of each. Eventually, we worked up to walking 1 minute, running 3 minutes, and then finally to running the whole time. Joey was excited to learn that each loop around the track is a quarter-mile. He has already set a goal to run 1 mile without stopping.



I'm glad we're spending time together and getting fit together. Maybe he'll even run on the track one day as a member of his high school's track team! ●

## 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.

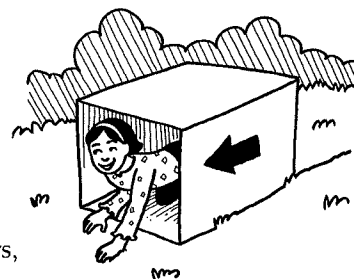
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## ACTIVITY CORNER

### Fun with obstacle courses

These ideas present no obstacle to getting fit! You and your youngster can create obstacle courses for her to run, crawl, and dash through with elements like these.

- **Stepping-stone climb.** Line up steps of varying heights with telephone books, step stools, or old cushions.
- **Tunnel crawl.** Drape an old sheet over lawn chairs, or cut the ends off large cardboard boxes.
- **Zig-zag run.** Set up soccer cones in a pattern for weaving in and out.
- **Shoebox slide.** Put out two shoe boxes. Step in (one foot in each), and slide from one point to another.
- **Wagon pull.** Fill a wagon with stuffed animals, and pull back and forth between two spots. ●



## IN THE KITCHEN

### Super sliders

Your family is sure to get a kick out of these healthy versions of sliders (miniature burgers).

#### Chicken and waffles

Bake or grill boneless chicken breast, or use leftover cooked chicken. Drizzle with a little pure maple syrup. Sandwich between two toasted mini whole-grain waffles.

#### Meatball

Roll lean ground beef into meatballs. Broil until cooked through, about 6 minutes (flip midway). Place each meatball on the bottom

of a mini whole-wheat roll, cover with  $\frac{1}{2}$  slice mozzarella cheese, and broil 1 minute more. Spread the top half of the bun with 1 tbsp. marinara sauce, heat, and put the sandwich together.

#### Salmon

In a blender, combine 1 cup plain Greek yogurt,  $\frac{1}{2}$  cucumber, and 2 tbsp. fresh dill (or 2 tsp. dried). Set aside. Broil or grill salmon fillets, 4–5 minutes per side. Cut into small pieces, and place each in a multi-grain dinner roll with a dollop of sauce. ●

