

# Nutrition Nuggets

Food and Fitness for a Healthy Child

February 2021

Darien Public School District 61

Wellness Committee

**BEST BITES**

## Healthier treats

When your youngster has dessert, make it a little lighter with these ideas. Serve a single scoop of ice cream in a teacup or ramekin instead of a cone. Cut a smaller wedge of pie. Split a cupcake. Or let her dip a few thin cookies in



fat-free milk—and then drink the milk for a healthy dose of calcium.

## That's me on a bike!

Ask your child to draw or paint pictures of himself playing sports or doing other physical activities. He might sketch himself playing softball or riding a bike. Or he could paint a playground where he's crossing the monkey bars or going down the slide. Hang up his pictures to inspire him to keep up the active fun.

## DID YOU KNOW?

The hearty flavor of mushrooms can mimic that of meat, which makes them perfect for mixing into burgers, meatballs, and meatloaf. You'll add nutrients—and stretch your dollars because mushrooms cost less than meat. Simply chop and mix them into lean ground turkey or beef. *Tip:* Aim for a 50-50 blend.

## Just for fun

**Q:** What plays and runs around all day, comes home at night, and stays in the corner with its tongue hanging out?

**A:** Your sneaker.



## What's in my food?

Teach your child to check the ingredients list on packaged foods, and you'll instill a lifelong habit that can help him choose foods wisely. Here's how:

- Have your youngster take a few items out of your pantry or refrigerator and read the ingredients out loud. What's first? Last? Explain that they're listed in order of amount—the food contains the most of the first ingredient and the least of the last ingredient.
- Ask him to check the labels for specific ingredients. For example, where in the order does whole wheat or sugar appear? Point out that sugar goes by different names, including many that end in "ose" (*glucose, fructose, dextrose, maltose, sucrose, high-fructose corn syrup*).
- Let your child count the number of ingredients. When it comes to ingredients lists, shorter is usually better. If he's reading, he should be able to recognize



many of the words. If they're long and complicated, they are likely to be chemicals rather than natural foods.

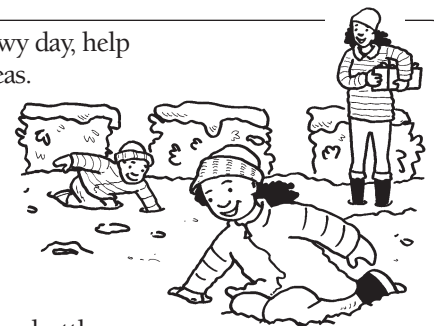
- Encourage your youngster to put what he's learning into practice when you make your grocery list. He can read ingredients lists he finds online to help you select products. Suggest that he look for varieties that list salt, oil, and sugar toward the end. Or you might agree on a rule of thumb, such as no more than five ingredients. ♥

## Games for snow

When your youngster wakes up to a snowy day, help her make the most of it with these active ideas.

**Treasure hunts.** To get your child running around in the snow, take turns burying a plastic toy and shouting out clues for the others to find it. **No snow?** Hide the toy in bushes, in tall grass, or behind a shed.

**Colorful trails.** Let your youngster fill spray bottles with water and food coloring. Then you can make colorful trails for each other to follow. **No snow?** Spray the color onto grass (it will wash away in the rain), or make trails with pebbles. ♥



# Yikes—yeast is alive!

Your youngster may not know that her bread is “alive.” Have her experiment with a main ingredient in bread—the live organism known as yeast—and she’ll learn more about the foods she eats.

**1.** Ask your child to empty an active dry yeast packet onto dark construction paper and examine it with a magnifying glass. Does it move or look alive? (Yes.)



**2.** Let her pour the yeast into a bowl and add 1 tsp. sugar and  $\frac{1}{4}$  cup warm water.

**3.** Have your youngster wait 20 minutes and observe (she’ll see bubbles in the mixture). She can pour the mixture back onto the dark paper and look with a magnifying glass again (she’ll see movement).

*What happened?* The bubbles are carbon dioxide, the gas produced when the yeast “eats” the sugar. The movement is the yeast making more yeast as the chemical reaction continues. Show your youngster a few pieces of bread. If she looks closely, she will find the bubbles baked right in—making the bread lighter and fluffier. ♥

## Q&A Encourage whole grains

**Q:** I’ve read that whole grains are important for my child’s diet. But she doesn’t like brown rice or whole-grain pasta. What should I do?

**A:** Fortunately, there are many sources of whole grains. Try serving brown rice cakes layered with bananas and nut or seed butter. Or give her mini whole-wheat bagels with whipped cream cheese. When you buy pancake mix or frozen waffles, choose whole-grain varieties. And let your daughter pick out whole-grain cereals to try.

Also, you can build whole grains into meals you have away from home. Ask for whole-wheat crust when you order pizza, for instance. When they’re part of your child’s favorite foods, she may happily eat whole grains!



*Note:* Children ages 4–8 and girls ages 9–13 need 5 servings of grains a day, and boys ages 9–13 need 6. At least half of those servings should be whole grains. Examples of 1 serving include  $\frac{1}{2}$  cup cooked rice or pasta, 1 slice of bread, and 1 small tortilla. ♥



## ACTIVITY CORNER

### Soccer skill-builders

Your youngster can get a great workout, have fun, and improve his soccer skills with these games.



● **Slalom course.** Set up obstacles (soccer cones, upside-down buckets) in a zigzag pattern in your yard or at a park. Each person kicks a soccer ball through the course, weaving in and out of the obstacles from start to finish and back—without hitting the obstacles. If he hits one, he goes back to start.

● **Soccer tennis.** Lay a long piece of rope on the grass. One player stands on each side. The players kick the ball back and forth to each other over the rope—letting it bounce only once or not at all.

● **Target practice.** Balance a soccer ball on top of a cone or a plastic cup. Players take turns kicking a second soccer ball at the first one. Score one point each time the ball is toppled. ♥

## IN THE KITCHEN

### Made by hand

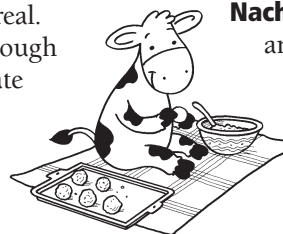
Cooking and eating are extra fun when your child can use his hands. Make sure he washes his hands well, and try these recipes.

● **Nut butter balls.** Let your youngster mix 1 cup creamy nut or seed butter with  $\frac{1}{3}$  cup honey, 1 tsp. vanilla, and 3 cups crispy rice cereal. Then, help him roll the dough into small balls. Refrigerate 1 hour.

● **Apple crumble.** Slice 4 apples. Have your child lay them in a baking

dish. In a bowl, combine  $\frac{1}{3}$  cup flour, 1 cup rolled oats,  $\frac{1}{2}$  cup brown sugar,  $\frac{1}{2}$  tsp. salt, and 1 tsp. cinnamon. With his hands, he can work in  $\frac{1}{3}$  cup butter until the mixture is crumbly, then sprinkle it over the apples. Bake at 375° for 30 minutes.

● **Nachos.** Ask your youngster to arrange baked tortilla chips on a microwave-safe plate and top them with canned refried beans (fat-free) and low-fat shredded cheese. Broil until the cheese melts. ♥



## 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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