

Nutrition Nuggets

Food and Fitness for a Healthy Child

April 2020

Darien Public School District 61

Wellness Committee

BEST BITES

Better ballpark choices

Baseball season is here! If you take your child out to a ball game, look for healthier concession-stand options. Examples include plain popcorn, grilled chicken strips dipped in mustard, fresh fruit, and veggie wraps. Watching the game at home?



Let your youngster set up his own nutritious snack bar. *Tip:* Drink water rather than soda.

Take a homework break

When your child does homework, encourage her to take active breaks. A younger child may need a break every 20 minutes, while an older one might work for 45 minutes at a time. She could set a timer to remind herself. When the timer goes off, she can march in place, do jumping jacks, or walk up and down the stairs.

DID YOU KNOW?

Rhubarb is in season now, and it contains a lot of calcium and vitamin C. Since rhubarb is naturally tart, your child may enjoy it roasted and sweetened. Remove the leaves, cut into bite-sized pieces, drizzle with honey, and roast 5 minutes at 450°. Chill, then serve with strawberries.

Just for fun

Q: Why is a tomato round and red?

A: Because if it were long and green, it would be a cucumber!



Whole grains for health

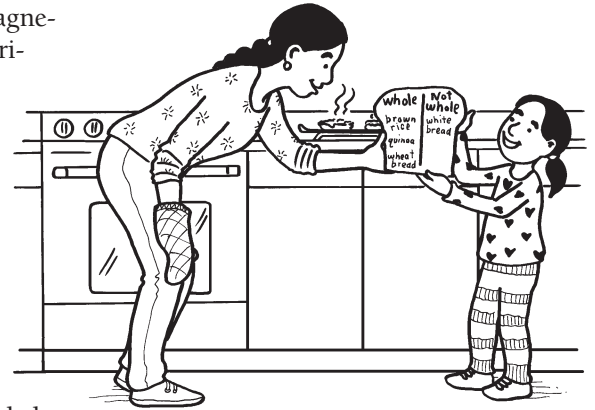
Whole grains provide zinc, magnesium, B vitamins, and fiber—nutrients your growing child needs. Plus, they add many flavors and textures to meals. Get more whole grains into her diet with these ideas.

Track your grains

Help your youngster make half of her grains whole. Have her draw a slice of bread on brown paper, cut it out, and draw a line down the middle. She can label one half “Whole” and the other “Not whole.” Each time she eats a grain serving (one slice of bread or one cup of rice or pasta, for example), she lists it on the correct side. At the end of the day, have her count her grains.

Revamp recipes

Together, create new recipes for foods your child likes—swapping in whole grains. If she loves pizza, she could write a recipe for mini pizzas on whole-wheat English muffins. Her recipe for chicken nuggets might include crushed whole-grain cereal for the breading.



Now let her help you make the recipes for family meals.

Eat something new

Has your youngster ever had farro? How about barley or quinoa? Trying a new whole grain as a family—and incorporating it into something familiar—may make her more likely to eat it. For example, add farro to soups, toss cooked barley into salads, or put cooked quinoa into burritos. ♥

Food-related field trips

Your youngster can learn about food—and get more steps in while walking around—with these family outings.

● **Visit a garden center.** Let your child pick seeds to plant in containers or a garden. Talk about how you can use the vegetables or herbs he'll grow. (“We could make yummy pasta sauce with fresh basil.”)

● **Attend a food festival.** Try a “taste of the town” event where you can sample many different foods. Or look for a festival dedicated to a specific food like watermelon or potatoes—your youngster will see the various ways it can be served. Maybe you'll find an international fair where you could eat foods from Scandinavia or Guatemala, for instance, and expose your child to other cultures. ♥



Winning ways to support young athletes

Organized sports keep kids active and teach teamwork. But what is a parent's role? Use these three tips to help your child succeed in sports.

1. Be there. Attend your youngster's games or events as often as possible. Cheer on his efforts with encouraging words. Aside from snapping the occasional photo, try to avoid using your phone—your child will see that he has your full attention.



2. Encourage healthy eating.

Help your child pick out healthy snacks to keep in his gym bag. Good choices include oranges and whole-wheat crackers with hummus. Don't forget a water bottle! Also, the night before a game or meet, let him decide which lean protein, whole grain, and vegetable to have for dinner so he eats a nutritious, satisfying meal.

3. Focus on effort. Certainly congratulate your youngster when he succeeds (perhaps if he "sticks" his gymnastics floor routine or sinks a three-pointer in basketball). If he falls during a routine or misses a shot, you could say something like "I'm proud of you for bouncing back and trying hard until the end." ♥



PARENT TO PARENT "Invent" a healthy cereal

It seemed like every week my son Juan would ask for a new cereal he saw advertised on TV. The boxes looked like fun, with cartoon or video-game characters, but they were full of sugary ingredients like marshmallows and chocolate chips.

I asked Juan which ingredients he thought a healthy cereal would have. He said maybe oats, fruit, and nuts. That gave me an idea. I suggested that he invent his own cereal and make a commercial for it. Juan wrote a script for an ad promoting a cereal he called Monkey's Banana Crunch. It included nutritious ingredients like raisins and baked banana chips.

After Juan practiced a few times, I filmed his commercial for him. He had a blast pretending to be a rain-forest ranger encouraging his family to eat the cereal. Now my plan is to keep helping Juan look past what's on a package and consider whether the food inside is actually good for him. ♥



ACTIVITY CORNER

Fruit and veggie games

Celebrate colorful produce with these games that encourage your child to run, hop, and throw.

Color Match. Let your child tape squares of different-colored construction paper to separate buckets. Then, have her write names of fruits and vegetables on 12 index cards. Take turns drawing a card (such as pumpkin) and tossing a beanbag into the matching bucket (orange). Score a point for each correct shot—high score wins.



Red Pepper, Green Pepper, Yellow Pepper. Play this version of Red Light, Green Light. Players stand at the start line, and you call out commands. ("Green pepper" = run toward the finish line, "red pepper" = stop, and "yellow pepper" = hop forward.) If they move the wrong way, they return to the start. The first player to cross the finish line wins. ♥

IN THE KITCHEN

Tasty picnic sides

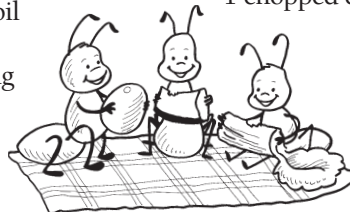
For your next picnic, skip the high-fat mayonnaise-based salads, and try these healthier options.

● **Waldorf fruit salad.** Stir together $\frac{1}{2}$ cup plain Greek yogurt, 1 tbsp. honey, and 1 tbsp. orange juice. Mix with 1 chopped apple, 1 cup halved grapes, 1 cup diced celery, and 1 cup chopped walnuts.

● **Sesame noodles.** Boil 6 oz. whole-wheat spaghetti noodles according to package directions, drain, and set aside. In a blender, mix $\frac{1}{3}$ cup creamy peanut

or sunflower seed butter, 1 tsp. minced ginger, 2 tbsp. rice vinegar, 2 tbsp. low-sodium soy sauce, 1 tbsp. sesame oil, 1 minced garlic clove, and 1 tsp. sweet chili sauce. Toss noodles with sauce.

● **Stuffed tomato salad.** Slice the tops off of 4 large tomatoes. Hollow them out, and mix the insides (seeds removed) with 1 cup cooked corn, 1 chopped cucumber (peeled), and 1 cubed avocado. Divide the mixture evenly among the tomatoes, drizzle with olive oil, and sprinkle with chopped fresh cilantro. ♥



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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