

Nutrition Nuggets

Food and Fitness for a Healthy Child

January 2020

Darien Public School District 61

Wellness Committee

BEST BITES

Rainbow skewers

Turn skewers into a veggie rainbow for a colorful snack or side dish. On each skewer, your child could alternate cherry tomatoes with slices of orange bell pepper, yellow squash, green zucchini, and purple eggplant. Brush

with olive oil and roast at 400° for 10–12 minutes or until tender.



Be a "star"

Here's a fun exercise for your youngster—and the whole family. Lie on your backs with your arms and legs stretched out into a star shape. Lift your left leg, raise your head and shoulders off the ground, and reach to touch your left foot with your right hand. Change sides and alternate. *Idea:* How many "star touches" can he do in a minute?

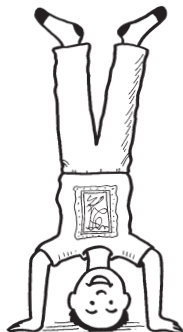
DID YOU KNOW?

Seeds are filled with nutrients. Add them to your child's diet by letting her toss unsalted sunflower seeds into salads or add pumpkin seeds to soups and cooked vegetables. Try grinding seeds in a coffee grinder, and sprinkle them on hot or cold cereal or yogurt.

Just for fun

Mom: Zach, why are you standing on your head?

Zach: Because my feet are tired!



A+ breakfasts

Fuel up your child for the school day ahead by making sure he eats a nutritious breakfast. He'll be more alert for learning and playing when you start the morning with these tips.

Prepare ahead

Getting healthy meals on the table during the busy school-and-work week can be challenging. Make it easier by prepping ingredients the night before. For example, cook a batch of oatmeal, barley, or brown rice. In the morning, your youngster could microwave it and add his favorite toppings to create a grain bowl. Some ideas: diced peaches, dried cranberries, crushed walnuts, cinnamon, nonfat Greek yogurt.

Eat at school

What's more fun than eating breakfast at home? Eating a healthy breakfast at school with friends! Scan the cafeteria menu with your child. He'll find fresh fruit and perhaps options like whole-wheat French toast sticks, scrambled egg tacos, and whole-grain banana muffins.



When he gets home, ask him to tell you what he had for breakfast that day.

Make weekends special

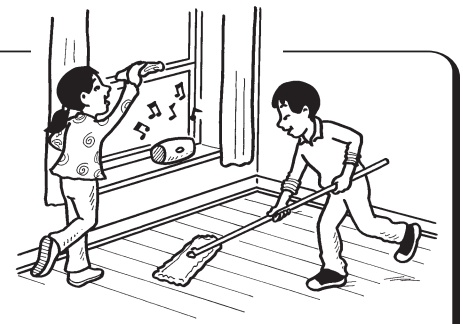
With more time on the weekends, plan special morning meals you and your youngster can cook together. Toss frozen blueberries into whole-grain pancake batter. Or make grilled breakfast sandwiches on whole-wheat bread, tucking in nutritious ingredients like tomato slices, mushrooms, and low-fat cheddar cheese. *Idea:* Let him use cookie cutters to cut the pancakes or sandwiches into different shapes. ♥

Add activity to chores

Help your youngster get fit while building responsibility. Try these suggestions the next time she does chores.

● **Listen to music.** Make an upbeat "chores playlist" together. Your child can dance while both of you wipe down kitchen counters, dust, or sweep. *Tip:* Bring in math by asking her to estimate how long chores will take and create a playlist to fit that time.

● **Turn it into a game.** To tidy up, each family member is responsible for one room—collecting shoes, toys, books, or papers and putting them where they belong. Set a timer and meet back in the living room when it goes off. Did everyone finish straightening up their room? ♥



Prevent winter weight gain

As temperatures get colder, your child might be tempted to stay inside and eat. Keep her from overeating and gaining weight with these strategies.

Hungry or bored? When your youngster says she's hungry an hour after eating, she may just be bored. Suggest that she do an activity she enjoys, like building with Legos or reading. If she is still hungry afterward, offer her a piece of fruit and a glass of water.



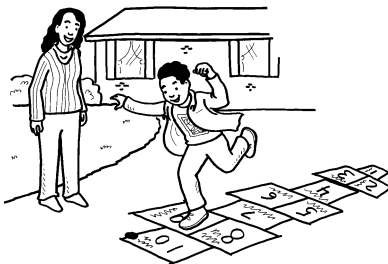
Plan active fun. Schedule fitness on the calendar just like other activities. On weekends you could pencil in ice-skating on Friday night, bird-watching on Saturday morning, or bike riding on Sunday afternoon. During the week, take after-dinner walks. You might even organize group walks with neighbors—your child will enjoy having kids her age along!

ACTIVITY CORNER

Classic games

Play games with your youngster that you loved as a child—but give them a twist to help him get more physical activity. Here are three.

1. Simon Says. Take turns being “Active Simon.” For instance, say, “Active Simon says, ‘Do four jumping jacks.’” Just remember, if the caller doesn't say “Active Simon says,” you have to stay still.



2. Hopscotch. Draw a hopscotch board and number the squares 1–10. Write a different action in each square. (“Run in a circle.” “Do push-ups.”) Throw a rock on the board and hop to that spot. When you get there, do the action as many times as the number on the square.

3. Hide-and-seek. Choose various fitness items (rubber ball, jump rope, hula-hoop). One person hides the items. The first player to find one gets to lead an activity for everyone else, using the found object. ●



Dish up food. Eating directly out of a bag or box often leads to overeating. That's because it's hard to see how much you're really taking. Keep your youngster from developing this habit by having her put snacks on plates or in bowls. ●

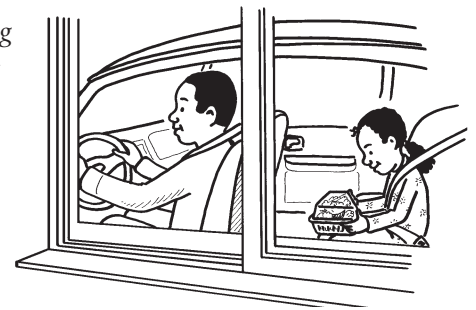
Q&A Fast food? Better choices!

Q: Sometimes we can't seem to avoid getting fast food after a busy day of work and after-school activities. How can I help my daughter make better choices in the drive-thru lane?

A: Eating on the go poses challenges, but with a little planning, it's possible to turn fast food into a healthier meal.

How? Start with the drinks. Give your child a choice between water and low-fat milk. She'll avoid the sugar in soda, fruit juice, or milkshakes. Model good choices for her by sticking to water yourself.

Next, skip the “kid's meal.” Your daughter may enjoy a salad as a main meal, topped with grilled chicken or beans for protein. Let her in on a “secret”: Dressing can practically double the calories of her meal. Encourage her to ask for dressing on the side—and to skip high-calorie toppings like bacon bits and croutons. Finally, order nutritious sides, such as apple slices or carrot sticks. You'll still have a meal in a hurry, but one with nutrients added. ●



IN THE KITCHEN

Plant-based plates

Meatless Monday...or meatless any day! Encourage healthy plant-based eating with tasty and filling recipes like these.

Veggie pasta salad

Cook 8 oz. whole-grain pasta, and drain. Combine with 2 tbsp. olive oil, 2 cups chopped fresh spinach, ½ cup diced sun-dried tomatoes (not packed in oil), ¾ cup sliced roasted red peppers, and ½ cup diced red onion. Sprinkle in ½ cup Parmesan cheese and 1 tsp. oregano. Chill 2 hours and serve.

Loaded sweet potato

Split a baked sweet potato in half. Cover it with cooked black beans (canned, rinsed), diced mango, and avocado slices.

Garden pita

Top a 7-inch whole-wheat pita with 2 tbsp. low-sodium pizza sauce, ¼ cup sliced zucchini, and ¼ cup finely diced broccoli florets. Bake at 350° until the vegetables are tender. Top with ¼ cup crumbled feta. ●



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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