Nutrition Nuggets™

Food and Fitness for a Healthy Child

September 2017

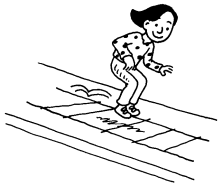
Sauk Centre Elementary School



BEST BITES

Chalk up fitness

Boost your youngster's activity by having her draw a sidewalk-chalk fitness course. On



a sidewalk or blacktop, she can create "obstacles," such as a ladder to "climb" or a river to jump over. Then, she could write words like *cartwheel* or *crawl* beside her pictures to guide her and her friends along the course.

Pasta—or squash?

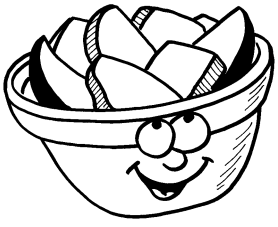
If your child likes playing with his food, he'll enjoy this low-carb and low-calorie pasta alternative. Cut a spaghetti squash in half, put it on a baking sheet (cut sides up), and bake 30 minutes at 400°. Cool slightly. Let your youngster use a fork to scrape the flesh and pull out spaghetti-like strands! Top with your favorite sauce.

DID YOU KNOW? Calcium plays a key role in strengthening your child's bones and teeth—and it's not just found in dairy products. Dark leafy greens also count toward the 1,000 mg of calcium your child needs each day. And look for the phrase "calcium-fortified" on orange juice, cereals, English muffins, and non-dairy "milk" (almond, soy, coconut).

Just for fun

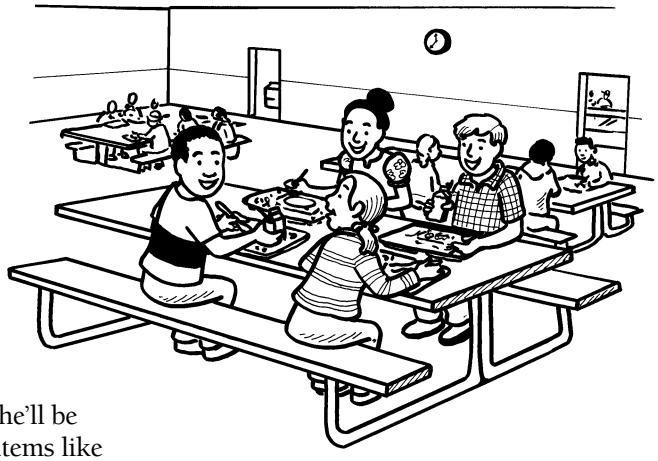
Q: If I cut an apple into fourths and a pear into eighths, what will I get?

A: Fruit salad!



Dine out in the cafeteria

Does your child love to eat out? Do you want him to eat healthy foods during the school day? Encourage him to dine in the cafeteria!



Eat breakfast at school

Suggest that your youngster start a "breakfast club." He could meet friends in the cafeteria for a nutritious meal before school. It's easy and convenient—you won't need to make breakfast, and he'll be able to choose from healthy items like eggs, cereal, fruit, and milk.

Sample new fruits and veggies

What does kiwi taste like? How about radishes? The cafeteria is a great place to try different fruits and vegetables. Read the school menu together each week, and let your child circle foods to "taste test." After school, play a guessing game: He gives clues about items he sampled, and you identify them. *Example:* "White and crunchy," "tastes kind of like an apple" (jicama).

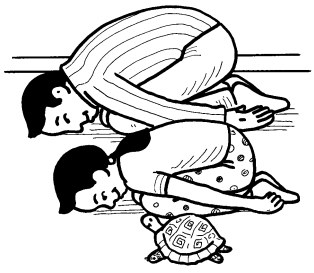
Serve "cafeteria foods"

Try making cafeteria foods at home to help your youngster get used to new flavors. For instance, coat skinless chicken pieces with whole-grain breading for healthier chicken nuggets. He'll be more likely to enjoy the flavor of whole grains if he also eats them outside of school.

Note: Your family might qualify for free or reduced-price school meals. Look for a form in your child's backpack or on the school website.

Stretch those muscles

March like a toy soldier, then tuck in like a turtle! Stretching improves your youngster's flexibility, and you can make it interesting with these playful stretches:



- Together, imagine that you're toy soldiers. Stand tall, and kick one leg high, trying to touch your toes with the opposite hand. Repeat with the other leg and arm, and alternate until you've crossed the room.
- Pretend to be turtles in their shells. Kneel with feet together, and sit back on your heels. Then bend over, touching your forehead to the floor with your arms along your sides. Hold for 15–30 seconds.

Note: To prevent injury, your child should warm up before stretching with five minutes of light aerobic exercise (dancing, walking).

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Healthy weeknight buffets at home

Make dinners easier—and more fun—by creating healthy do-it-yourself buffets ahead of time. Follow these steps.



1. Brainstorm. On the weekend, ask your child to help think of ideas for the week like a pizza buffet, a taco bar, or an Asian wrap station.

2. Shop. Have your youngster write or draw a grocery list for each buffet. For pizza, her list might include whole-wheat dough, turkey pepperoni, shredded mozzarella cheese, tomato sauce, and mushrooms.

3. Prep. On Sunday, work together to prep ingredients. Your child could roll out individual pizza crusts to prebake. Or you can cook lean ground beef for tacos while she drains and rinses canned black beans.

4. Store. Let your youngster put items for each buffet into individual containers. For Asian wraps, she might place diced grilled chicken, cooked brown rice, mandarin oranges, and peanut dressing into separate bowls.

5. Enjoy. At dinnertime, set out the ingredients for that night's buffet, along with anything else you need (tortillas, lettuce leaves, dressing). Reheat items if necessary. Then, family members can make their way through the line and customize their dinners!



ACTIVITY CORNER Creative catches

Throwing and catching build your youngster's arm strength and improve her hand-eye coordination. Try these games for a catch-y twist.

Play hot potato

Don't be caught holding the ball when the music stops! Players toss a ball back and forth while one person stops the music every few throws. Whoever is holding the ball is the new DJ.

Count it out

Have your child throw a ball high in the air and count how many times she can clap her hands before catching the ball. Or take turns, and see who claps the most times.

Go for variety



Vary the "balls" you throw. Consider small pillows, bean bags, or socks filled with rice. *Idea:* Go outside and play catch with water balloons.

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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Q&A Get excited about PE

Q: *My son doesn't like to participate in PE class because he says he's "not athletic." How can I help him get comfortable so he enjoys PE?*



A: PE is a great opportunity for your son to run and play with classmates while he learns and stays active.

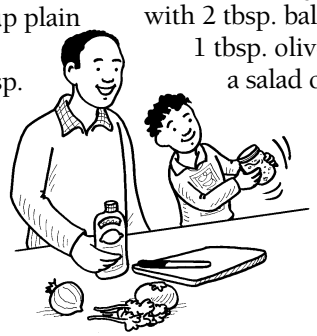
You could start by mentioning his hesitation to his PE teacher. She might suggest activities you can do at home or pair him up in class with a student who seems more confident about PE. Then, send the teacher occasional notes to check on his progress.

Also, visit a playground, and encourage your son to teach you skills he is learning or games he plays in class. As he shows you how he can do a chin-up or cross the balance beam, or explains the rules for kickball, he'll build confidence in his athletic ability.

IN THE KITCHEN Think outside the bottle

Salads can pack a lot of nutrition into one bowl. But store-bought dressing may add unwanted ingredients like preservatives, saturated fat, or MSG. With your youngster, whip up these good-for-you dressings.

- **Tahini.** Whisk together $\frac{1}{3}$ cup plain yogurt, 2 tbsp. tahini, 1 tbsp. lime juice, $\frac{1}{2}$ tsp. oregano, $\frac{1}{2}$ tsp. cumin, and $\frac{1}{2}$ tsp. minced garlic. Pair with butterhead lettuce, chickpeas (canned, rinsed), and sliced cucumber.
- **Pico de gallo.** Combine 2 diced tomatoes, 1 small diced onion, and 1 minced garlic clove in a bowl. Stir in 2–3 tbsp. lime juice and $\frac{1}{4}$ cup chopped cilantro. Toss with shredded romaine lettuce, diced bell pepper, and avocado chunks.
- **Citrus.** Mix $\frac{1}{3}$ cup orange juice with 2 tbsp. balsamic vinegar and 1 tbsp. olive oil. Sprinkle over a salad of spinach, dried cranberries, and sliced almonds.



Note: Toss dressings with salad just before serving, or refrigerate for 3–4 days.