Nutrition Nuggets™

Food and Fitness for a Healthy Child

November 2017

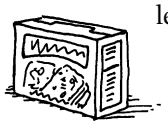
Sauk Centre Elementary School



BEST BITES

Count the ingredients

A long list of ingredients on a cereal box or a jar of pasta sauce often means the food is highly processed. At the grocery store,



let your youngster compare several brands of an item on your list (say, cereal bars). She can count the ingredients in each—and put the one with the fewest ingredients in your cart.

Explore the great outdoors

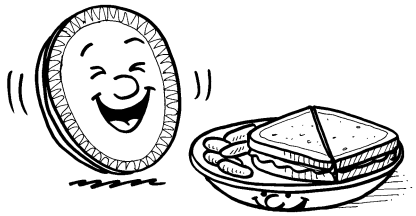
Cooler temperatures offer the perfect opportunity to discover outdoor community "gems" with your child. Help him find local plants and animals while you walk along a trail or through a park or botanical garden. For extra fun and exercise, bring along helmets and explore on bikes, skateboards, or scooters (where permitted).

DID YOU KNOW? November 6 is National Nachos Day. Make this popular appetizer healthier by using whole-grain tortilla chips and swapping plain Greek yogurt for sour cream. Melt real cheese on top (rather than store-bought queso). Then, add vegetables like chopped tomatoes, corn, shredded lettuce, and diced red onion.

Just for fun

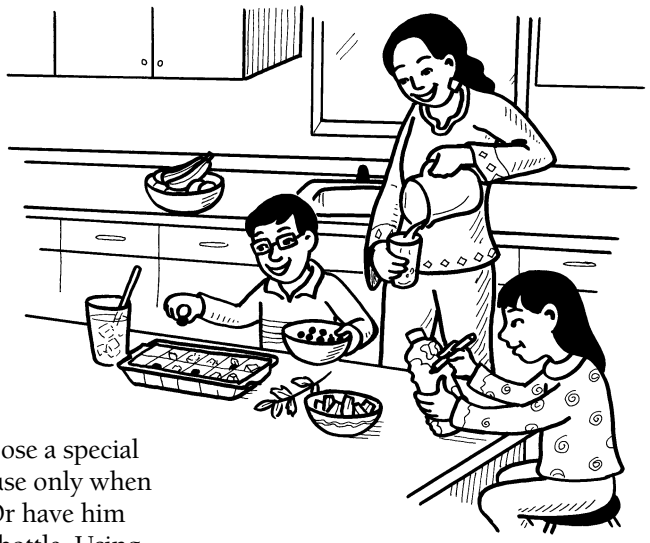
Q: What did one plate say to another?

A: Lunch is on me.



Just add water (or milk)!

Does your child ask for juice boxes, soda, or sports drinks when he's thirsty? Loaded with sugar and calories, these choices offer little nutrition. The best way to quench his thirst is to drink water or milk. Try the following tips to encourage healthier beverage choices.



Make it motivating

Let your youngster choose a special cup at the dollar store to use only when he drinks milk or water. Or have him decorate a reusable water bottle. Using permanent markers, he can jazz up a plain bottle with his name, colorful pictures, and creative designs.

Add flavor

Enhance the flavor of water and milk with these healthy twists. Fill an ice cube tray with water, invite your child to add a flavor mix-in (a mint leaf, a pineapple chunk, a raspberry) to each compartment, and freeze. Then, he could choose a cube to flavor his water. When he drinks milk, he might try stirring in a sprinkle of cinnamon or a few drops of vanilla extract.

Go for fizz

Your youngster may enjoy the fizzy effect of plain seltzer or sparkling water. With zero calories, sugar, or artificial colors or flavors, this bubbly water is fun to drink—without all the unhealthy stuff that's in soda. And seltzer is now sold in a variety of interesting natural flavors like mandarin orange, cucumber, and pomegranate.

Get your groove on

Keeping fit can be as simple as dancing! Put on music, and enjoy these ideas with your youngster.



- **Shadow dancing.** In a darkened room, have your child face a blank wall while someone else shines a flashlight on her from behind. She could create cool moves to make her shadow "dance."
- **Chain reaction.** Build a dance sequence together. The first person does a simple movement like swinging her arms overhead. The next dancer copies that move, then adds one of her own. Take turns, each time repeating the sequence from the beginning and adding a new move at the end.

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Science in the kitchen

Boost your youngster's enthusiasm for healthy eating with these hands-on experiments that weave in science fun.



"Egg-cellent" snack

Experiment: Let your child fill two glasses with water and add 1 tbsp. salt to one. Place a fresh egg in each. What happens? The egg in salt water will float. Why? (The egg is denser than plain water, but less dense than salt water.) *Note:* If the egg doesn't float, have her add 1 tsp. salt at a time until it does.

Eat: Hard-boiled eggs are a protein-rich snack. Place eggs in a saucepan, and cover with water. Put on a lid, boil 1 minute, and remove from heat. Let sit covered for 12 minutes. Drain, rinse under cold water, and peel.

Popping perfection

Experiment: Have your youngster observe unpopped popcorn kernels. (They're small, brown, and hard.) Then, she should place $\frac{1}{4}$ cup kernels in a paper lunch bag and fold the top over a few times. Microwave 2–3 minutes, pour into a bowl, and let her observe again: The kernels are big, white, and fluffy! What happened? (Kernels contain water that turns into steam when heated. Steam expands, making the kernels explode.)

Eat: Popcorn is a healthy whole grain. Instead of salt, sprinkle with Parmesan cheese, garlic powder, or paprika.



Q&A

DIY convenience foods

Q: *Our grocery store stocks precut vegetables and other time-saving items, but they're too expensive for my budget! Any suggestions?*

A: With a little planning, you can make your own convenience foods at home.



On weekends, ask your child to help you prep vegetables for the week. For example, wash and dry lettuce, and place in a covered container with a dry paper towel to absorb moisture. You can also wash, chop, and store firm veggies like carrots, broccoli, and cauliflower.

Cook chicken pieces or portions of meat, and seal in zipper bags to use within 2–3 days. You can even make pasta or rice in advance. Toss with olive oil so it doesn't get sticky, and put in an airtight container.

Your refrigerator will resemble the prepared-foods case at the grocery store—but you won't spend any extra money.

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

Fitness: It's in the cards!



Put a clever twist on physical activity by helping your youngsters make their own deck of family fitness cards. Here's how.

Together, come up with at least a dozen active ideas that can be done in less than five minutes. Be as creative or silly as you like! Write each one on the front of a separate index card. For example:

- Hop on one foot for one minute while holding the other foot with one hand and pinching your nose. Switch feet and hop for one more minute.
- Lie on your stomach, and pretend to swim like a frog for three minutes.
- Hold hands with a partner. Skip back and forth across the room five times.

On the back of each card, your children can illustrate the activity. Put the cards into a box, and pull one out whenever it's time for a burst of activity!

IN THE KITCHEN

Healthier holiday classics

No need to forgo favorite Thanksgiving dishes. Consider these better-for-you versions.

- **Green bean casserole.** For the topping, toss 1 chopped onion and $\frac{1}{2}$ cup sliced fresh mushrooms with 2 tbsp. whole-wheat breadcrumbs. Spread mixture on a greased baking sheet, and bake 10–15 minutes at 400° or until browned. Microwave 12 oz. fresh or frozen green beans, transfer to a dish, and add topping.
- **Cranberry-orange sauce.** In a medium saucepan, combine 10 oz. fresh cranberries, 1 cup water, $\frac{1}{3}$ cup honey, 2 tbsp. grated orange rind, $\frac{1}{4}$ cup orange juice, $\frac{1}{2}$ tsp. cinnamon, and $\frac{1}{4}$ tsp. allspice. Boil, reduce heat, and simmer 20 minutes until mixture thickens.
- **Sage-couscous stuffing.** Cook 1 cup whole-wheat pearl couscous according to package directions. Then, heat 2 tbsp. olive oil in a large skillet over medium heat. Add $\frac{1}{2}$ cup each diced onion, celery, and carrots. Saute until soft. Stir in couscous, 1 tbsp. fresh sage, and $\frac{1}{2}$ tsp. each salt and pepper.

