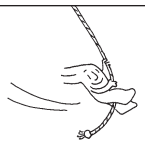
Nutrition Nuggets™
Food and Fitness for a Healthy Child
February 2018
Sauk Centre Elementary School



BEST BITES

Find the right milk

Milk alternatives, such as soy, almond, rice, and coconut milk, are widely available today. That's good news for youngsters who can't have dairy. When choosing nondairy milk, look for unsweetened varieties that are fortified with calcium and vitamin D.

DID YOU KNOW?

Jumping rope builds bone density, improves heart health, boosts balance and motor coordination, and burns calories. Help your child find a book of jump rope rhymes or games at the library or online. Then, try some together, or encourage her to teach them to her friends.



Thrifty kitchen supplies

Kitchen tools and appliances can be expensive. Consider taking your youngster with you to thrift shops and garage sales to stock up on cooking gadgets. This shows him the value of budget-friendly shopping. Good bets for used items include loaf pans, measuring cups, pots, and blenders.

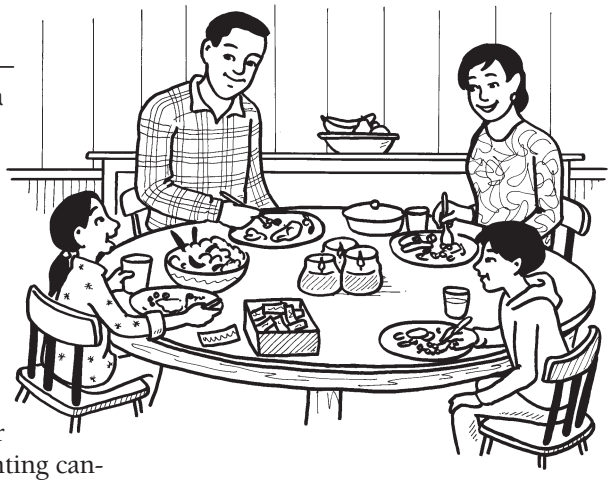
Just for fun

Q: What did one pretzel say to the other pretzel?

A: "Let's twist!"



Connecting over family meals



Gathering for a meal is about more than just eating—it's also about connecting as a family. Research shows that families who share meals tend to eat healthier foods. Here are ways to encourage together time around the kitchen table.

Eat by candlelight

Eating slowly gives your child's brain time to tell her stomach it's full, reducing her chance of overeating. Try lighting candles to create a relaxed atmosphere—this can encourage everyone to slow down and savor the meal. Plus, your child will feel excited that dinnertime seems "fancy."

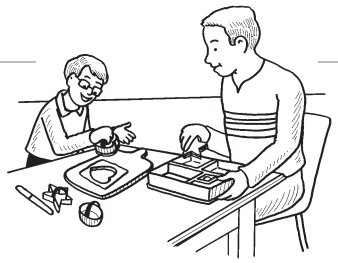
Create a conversation box

Everyone will look forward to meals with this idea. Together, think of questions like "If you could travel through time, what decade would you visit?" or "What would happen if kids and parents could trade places for a day?" Let your youngster write the conversation starters on slips of paper and put them in an empty box. During a meal, she can pull out a question to spark an interesting discussion.

Be flexible

Meals can be at different times of day or in different places. The key is to work with your family's schedule—and even add a touch of fun. One evening, you might eat on a picnic blanket on the living room floor. If everyone can't be home for dinner, have a family breakfast. On warmer days, eat on your patio or at a picnic table at the park.

Bento box lunches



A *bento box* is a container with different foods in individual compartments. Many Japanese children use them for school lunch. Try the bento box approach for a weekend lunch tradition:

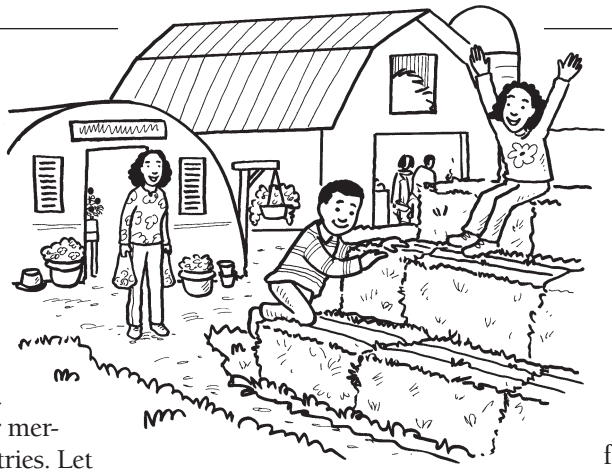
- What youngster wouldn't love cheese "stars," lean turkey "hearts," or melon "basketballs"? Use cookie cutters or other kitchen tools to cut food into fun shapes. Then, place the shapes in ramekins or small food-storage containers arranged on a plate.
- Turn a small ice cube tray into a bento box by putting bite-sized foods into its sections. Your child might fill them with chopped hard-boiled egg, pineapple chunks, and green beans. Or he may like leftover grilled chicken cubes, wholewheat crackers, grapes, and edamame.

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Take a healthy field trip

Nothing beats hands-on learning to spark your youngster's interest in nutritious foods and physical activity. A great way to do this? Plan healthy adventures like these.



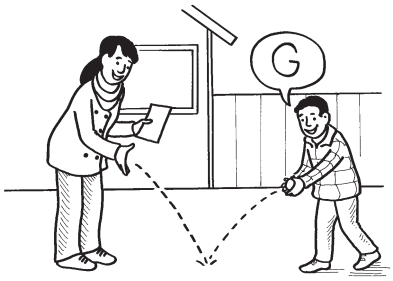
Explore food stores. Check out new-to-you health food shops, locally owned markets, or merchants specializing in foods from other countries. Let your child pick out something your regular store doesn't carry, like a loaf of freshly baked bread or an unfamiliar spice blend.

Try a gym. Many community centers, YMCAs, gyms, and rec centers offer free day passes or trial classes. Call around to find one. You and your youngster could swim, play tennis, or perhaps attend a parent-child class like yoga or karate.

Visit a farm. Search online for nearby farms and farmers' markets that are open in winter. Your child can choose fresh local vegetables to sample or to add to a dinnertime salad. A farm tour might also allow him to get exercise by climbing hay bales or rope ladders.

ACTIVITY CORNER Bounce and spell

Put an active twist on your child's next spelling test study session. Get his word list and a tennis ball, then find a space indoors or go outside to play a few rounds of Spelling Bee Bounce.



Stand about 6–12 feet from your youngster, say a word from his list, and bounce the ball to him. As he says each letter, he bounces the ball to you and then you bounce it back to him. If he gets a letter wrong, say, "Oops, try again!" and he starts the word over.

Get creative in this game. He could spin around before bouncing the ball, or he could pretend to shoot it to you like a basketball free-throw.

Before you know it, he'll have mastered his entire spelling list—and gotten exercise along the way!

Q&A Bedtime snacks



Q: *My daughter always wants a snack before she goes to bed. What should I give her?*

A: A bedtime snack can help stave off hunger until morning, especially if your family eats dinner on the early side.

The recommendations for bedtime snacks are the same as those for snacks your child eats any time of day: Stick to small portions, limit sugar, and choose proteins and whole grains.

Good options include oatmeal, whole-wheat toast topped with a sliced banana, or whole-grain pita pockets stuffed with hummus and shredded carrots. On the other hand, you'll want your youngster to stay away from less healthy items like cookies, cupcakes, and chips.

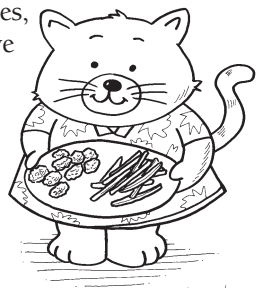
Tip: Avoid giving your child a snack in the hour before bedtime, since digesting food can make it harder for her to fall asleep.

IN THE KITCHEN Kid favorites: Baked, not fried

Chicken nuggets and french fries are popular with children—and they can be nutritious if they're not actually fried. Rethink these favorites with the following healthy twists.

Chicken nuggets

Cut $\frac{1}{2}$ lb. boneless, skinless chicken breasts into bite-sized pieces, and brush lightly with olive oil. In a bowl, mix $\frac{1}{2}$ cup whole-wheat bread crumbs, 2 tbsp. grated Parmesan cheese, and 1 tsp. Italian seasoning. Roll chicken in mixture to coat. Cook on a lightly greased baking sheet at 425° for 12–15 minutes, flipping halfway through, until chicken is fully cooked.



French fries

Cut 3 medium russet potatoes into strips. Lightly coat two baking sheets with cooking spray. In a bowl, combine potatoes with 2 tbsp. olive oil, 1 tsp. chili powder (optional), $\frac{1}{2}$ tsp. salt, and $\frac{1}{4}$ tsp. pepper. Arrange on baking sheets, and place in a 400° oven for 30 minutes (turning over after 15 minutes) or until crispy. Spread fries on a paper towel–lined plate to soak up excess oil.

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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