

Nutrition Nuggets

Food and Fitness for a Healthy Child

May 2021

Gonzales Independent School District



BEST BITES

Foods from my state

Washington apples, Maryland crabs, Kentucky blackberries ... what food is your state known for? Encourage your child to do research in books or online to find out, and help him use the food in a healthy recipe. Together, you might make apple-fennel coleslaw, baked crab cakes, or blackberry sorbet.

Stop and go



Help your youngster boost coordination with this fast-paced game. Kick a ball from player to player. The kicker calls out a body part (right foot, right elbow, left knee). The receiver tries to stop the ball using that body part. If a player doesn't follow the directions, she gets a point. Lowest score wins!

DID YOU KNOW?

If you receive SNAP benefits, you can use them to buy seeds and plants to grow food for your family. Visit fns.usda.gov/snap/retailer-locator to find participating stores. Then, let your child help you plant fresh vegetables and herbs in a garden or in windowsill pots. *Note:* Many farmers' markets accept SNAP benefits, too.

Just for fun

Q: How do you start a campfire with two sticks?

A: Make sure one is a match!



Right-size portions

It's important for your child to eat the right foods *and* to eat the right amount. Help her learn about portions with these hands-on ideas.

Measure snacks

At snack time, set out measuring cups and spoons along with snacks like dry cereal and raisins. Encourage your youngster to read the serving size on each package and measure the recommended amount onto her plate—and yours. She'll learn to use nutrition labels and discover healthy portion sizes.

Make a poster

Let your child create a chart that compares just-right portions of food to the size of everyday objects she chooses. First, share these common comparisons:

- 3 oz. chicken or fish = deck of cards
- $\frac{1}{2}$ cup cooked vegetables, pasta, or rice = lightbulb
- 1 cup raw vegetables = baseball
- 1 oz. cheese = pair of dice



Then, she can pick items that are about the same size and sketch them on poster board. She might draw a computer mouse for chicken, a mini stuffed animal for rice, her snow globe for raw veggies, and an eraser for cheese.

Divide your plate

When your youngster serves herself, suggest that she start by covering half of her plate with fruits and vegetables. For extra fun, she could divide her plate in half with asparagus spears or a spaghetti noodle! That strategy will help her take reasonable portions of protein and grains to fill the other half of her plate. ♥

Playground stretches

The playground is the perfect place for your youngster to do stretches. He'll improve his flexibility, which helps to prevent sports and overuse injuries. Here's how.

Reach high. Encourage your child to stretch and jump up to catch horizontal bars or monkey bars, then count how many times he can swing.

Stretch low. Suggest that your youngster try stretches on a balance beam or a painted line on the blacktop—without stepping off. First, he can put one foot in front of the other and touch his toes on the front foot. Then, have him turn sideways, step his legs out wide, and try to touch the beam. ♥



Salads kids want to eat

There's a whole world of interesting greens and other salad ingredients out there! Consider these tips to help your youngster fall in love with salads.

Try different leaves. Add more nutrients by encouraging your child to eat a variety of greens. He'll enjoy learning their names and discovering their unique flavors and textures. Each time you get groceries, let him pick out a new base for his next salad, such as red bibb, soft butter lettuce, dark green baby kale, purple radicchio, scoop-shaped endive, or curly frisée.



Use creative names. Your youngster might make "mac-and-cheese salad" with lettuce, tomato, cooked whole-wheat pasta, and low-fat shredded cheddar. Or you could invent "Popeye salad" with baby spinach, strawberries, and olive oil. *Idea:* He may get a kick out of learning that *rocket* is another name for arugula. Blast off with "rocket salad"—toss rocket with peach slices, part-skim ricotta cheese, and a drizzle of balsamic vinegar.

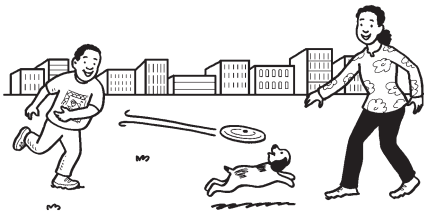
Add kid-friendly crunch. Encourage your child to crumble baked tortilla chips or his favorite whole-grain crackers onto his salad. Or he might sprinkle a salad with slivered almonds or sesame sticks. ♥

PARENT TO PARENT

Overweight? Focus on health

My son Patrick is a bit overweight. His pediatrician said we could help him by focusing on healthy foods and fun activities for the whole family instead of on Patrick's weight.

So we bought fruits and vegetables that Patrick likes, including oranges and snap peas, and bypassed the cookies and chips. Also, we've switched to lean meat and fat-free milk.



Now instead of lounging in front of the TV after dinner, we take walks or go to the park. We like playing 2-on-2 basketball, and we've recently discovered disc golf. Patrick has more energy—and he looks forward to kicking off the weekend with a family bike ride. ♥

OUR PURPOSE

To provide busy parents with practical ways to promote healthy nutrition and physical activity for their children.

Resources for Educators,
a division of CCH Incorporated
128 N. Royal Avenue • Front Royal, VA 22630
800-394-5052 • rfeustomer@wolterskluwer.com
www.rfeonline.com

Nutrition Nuggets™ is reviewed by a registered dietitian. Consult a physician before beginning any major change in diet or exercise.

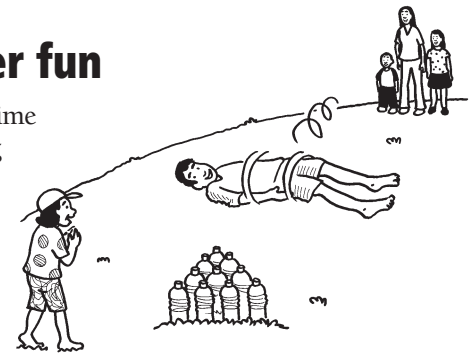
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ACTIVITY CORNER

Outdoor summer fun

Longer days mean more time to play outside. Get everyone's heart pumping with these games.

Human bowling. Family members are the "bowling balls" in this game. Have your child arrange "pins" (half-full plastic water bottles) at the bottom of a grassy hill. Take turns lying at the top and rolling horizontally to topple the pins. Count how many you knock down, reset, and run back up the hill. Knock over the most pins in 10 "rolls" to win.



Ribbon run. Help your youngster set up a running course by tying ribbons to 5–10 objects outside, such as a tree, bench, or fence. Time each other running the whole course from ribbon to ribbon, making sure to touch them all. The fastest player wins. ♥

IN THE KITCHEN

Create buffets at home

There's something for everyone at a buffet. Set out foods around themes like these, and your child can build her own meals.

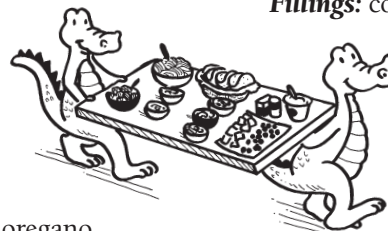
Pasta extravaganza

Noodles: whole-wheat pasta, spaghetti squash, or zucchini noodles

Sauce: marinara, pesto

Toppings:

cooked turkey meatballs, steamed broccoli florets, sun-dried tomatoes, grated Parmesan cheese, oregano



Yogurt station

Base: nonfat Greek yogurt

Mix-ins: blueberries, mango chunks, cinnamon, nutmeg, honey, chopped walnuts

Taco bar

Shell: soft corn or whole-wheat tortillas

Fillings: cooked lean ground beef or steamed shrimp, black beans, low-fat shredded pepper-jack cheese

Toppings: shredded lettuce, diced tomato, sliced avocado ♥