

Nutrition Nuggets

Food and Fitness for a Healthy Child



BEST BITES

I'm full

Help your child avoid overeating by taking time to talk about the color, texture, or taste of his food. If you say, "I love the color of carrots," he may respond, "I like how crunchy they are." By stopping to think, he'll slow down his eating pace, giving him time to feel full.

Kangaroo hop

Try this fitness idea from Down Under. Have your children hop like kangaroos by jumping with both feet and holding their hands in front of their chests. They can race each other by hopping from one end of a room (or yard) to the other. Or they could take turns being the leader and play Follow the Kangaroo.



DID YOU KNOW?

Research shows that students who skip breakfast have shorter attention spans and don't do as well on tests. Make sure your youngster gets up in time to have a nutritious breakfast either at home or at school. *Tip:* If she's having trouble waking up early enough, move her bedtime back.

Just for fun

Q: What's the worst thing about being an octopus?

A: Washing your hands before meals!



Snack attack

When your child bursts through the door after school or activities, she'll probably want something to eat. Try these tips for healthy snacks that will give her the energy she needs to play and do homework.

Stock the kitchen

Whatever is in the house is what your youngster will eat—so shop with that in mind. Get interesting fruits and vegetables in different colors. Buy mango or peach salsa, and let your child dip in veggie sticks (carrot, celery, jicama). Stock popcorn to air pop (rather than getting less healthy microwave popcorn). Then, offer her choices. She'll have a say in what she eats, but she'll be choosing only from healthy foods.

Have a mini-meal

Breakfast or lunch foods can make a good snack. You could serve oatmeal with bananas and cinnamon or tuck scrambled eggs into a pita pocket. Or try individual pizzas on whole-wheat English muffins. Top each half with a little

tomato sauce, shredded low-fat mozzarella cheese, and vegetables (sliced mushrooms, chopped onions), then bake until the cheese melts.

Build your own

Let your youngster get creative in the kitchen, and she'll be likely to eat the results. She can make kebabs by threading fruit (grapes, melon chunks) and cheese cubes onto toothpicks. Put out cookie cutters for her to cut sandwiches into fun shapes. Or she could spread cream cheese on rice cakes or apple slices and decorate them with raisins or dried cranberries. ♥



Feeling good about sports

Participating in sports can build your youngster up... or drag him down. Make athletics a positive experience for him with these strategies:

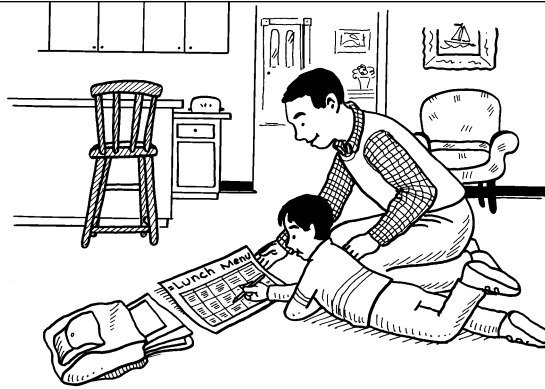
- Keep games in perspective. At this age, sports should be about having fun and developing skills. Ask about his favorite part of practice or the most interesting play in the game, rather than focusing on his performance or the score.
- Encourage your child to set goals—but make sure the goals are realistic. He might aim to touch the ball three times during a game or to try a move that he's been working on.
- Avoid comments about your youngster's size or body. Concentrate on the friends he is making and the effort he is putting forth ("I love how you tried to get the rebound"). ♥



Cafeteria plan

Why should your child buy school meals? Cafeteria meals are healthier than ever because of updated national nutrition standards. Plus, if he gets lunch at school, you can knock “pack lunch” off your to-do list! Consider these two suggestions.

1. Go over the school menu together. He could circle his favorite items and decide what he will put on his tray the next day. Talk up the menu items. (“The chicken burrito sounds really good!”) If you’re excited about the choices, he will share your excitement.



2. Discuss what he ate. What did he like best? What would he try again? You might suggest that he write to the cafeteria manager to tell her about his favorite meals. He could also make recommendations for new foods to serve.

Note: If your youngster has food allergies, alert the cafeteria manager, as well as his teacher and the school nurse. Give each of them a list of foods he’s allergic to, possible reactions, and what to do if he accidentally eats one of them. ♥



Q&A How much juice?

Q: My children love to drink juice. Should I try to limit how much of it they drink?

A: The short answer is “yes.” While juice has nutrients, it also has a lot of sugar.

Believe it or not, a 12-ounce glass of apple juice can contain 10 teaspoons of sugar — the same as in a can of cola — and a glass of grape juice can have 15 teaspoons of sugar.

Encourage your children to eat fruit rather

than drink juice. They will consume fiber along with more nutrients.

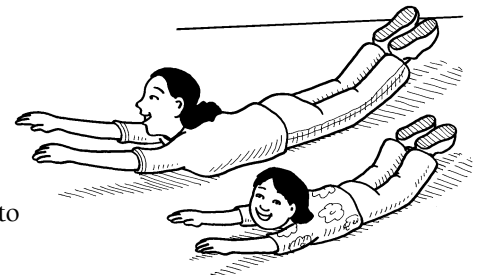
If your kids do have juice, try to limit it to a glass a day. Choose varieties marked 100 percent juice, and stay away from those labeled “fruit drink” or “fruit cocktail.” The best bets are orange or grapefruit juice since they have more natural vitamin C and less sugar. ♥



ACTIVITY CORNER

Exercise = fun

When children are young, exercise isn’t exercise — it’s just plain fun! Here are ideas for putting more physical activity into your youngster’s day.



Superman

Lie on your tummy with your arms straight out in front of you (as if you’re flying). Lift your chest, arms, and legs off the ground at the same time, and hold for five seconds. Lie back down. “Fly” 10 more times.

Bubble jumping jacks

Have your child do jumping jacks as you blow bubbles toward her. How many bubbles can she pop as she jumps? Switch, and let her blow the bubbles as you do jumping jacks.

Freeze dance

Play music, and dance up a storm. When you stop the music, everyone freezes. Hold your poses for 10 seconds, and start the music back up. ♥

IN THE KITCHEN

Rice bowls

For a quick and healthy meal, borrow this idea from Asian cuisine. Cook brown rice, divide it into bowls for each person, and add healthy toppings.

Breakfast: Scrambled eggs, chopped tomatoes, diced green bell peppers, and shredded Monterey Jack cheese

Chicken: Cubed, cooked chicken (use last night’s leftovers), microwaved frozen

vegetables like corn, peas, and carrots, and low-sodium teriyaki sauce

Taco: Lean ground beef (browned and drained), canned kidney beans (drained and rinsed), shredded cheddar cheese, and salsa

Note: One-half cup of brown rice provides one serving of whole grains (three servings a day are recommended). Also, rice is gluten-free, so it’s a great choice for children with celiac disease or wheat allergies. ♥



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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