

Nutrition Nuggets

Food and Fitness for a Healthy Child

February 2012

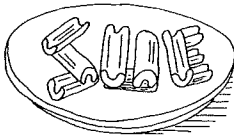
Missouri Valley Elementary School
Carol Rodewald, Food Service Director



BEST BITES

Make it personal

Encourage your child to eat nutritious foods by making them say her name! You might cut cheese slices in the shape of her initials, place on whole-wheat bread, and toast until the cheese melts slightly. Or spell out her name with bell pepper and celery sticks, and serve with hummus for dipping.



Protecting your teeth

In honor of Dental Health Month, help your youngster get in the habit of eating and drinking foods that are good for his teeth. For example, cheese, nuts, eggs, chicken, meat, and milk protect tooth enamel. And crunchy fruits and vegetables can prevent decay. The best drinks? Water and milk—instead of sugary drinks like soda.

DID YOU KNOW?

Herbs and spices are a healthy way to add flavor to food. Rather than reaching for the salt shaker, try adding cayenne pepper to eggs, rosemary to meats, or tarragon to vegetables. *Tip:* Let your child grow fresh herbs in pots and snip the plants to use while you're cooking.

Just for fun

Q: What are two things you can't have for lunch?



A: Breakfast and dinner.

A family exercise routine

The family that exercises together... gets healthy together! Make it easy—and fun—to work out by creating a home gym. Here's how.

1. Find a spot

Set aside a corner of your basement or family room as your exercise space. Have your children make a sign ("Our Gym"), and hang it there.



2. Gather equipment

Get a large playground ball, a small step stool, a jump rope, and a mat or towel. Together, make weights by filling water bottles with sand, water, or pennies.

3. Plan exercises

On index cards, help your youngsters name, describe, and illustrate exercises for each piece of equipment.

Around the world: Hold the ball with your arms straight down. Swing it in big circles in front of you, keeping your arms straight.

Step up: Step onto the step stool, and step down. Repeat quickly 10–15 times.

Jumping bean: Jump rope with both feet for 20 seconds, then one foot at a time for 20 seconds each.

Arch like a cat: On the mat, get on your hands and knees. Arch your back up, and hold. Let your stomach sink down, and hold. Repeat for 1 minute.

Squat down: Hold a weight in each hand and lower your body into a squatting position. Then, stand up. Do 5–10 times.

4. Do the circuit

Arrange the equipment in a circle, and put an exercise card by each item. *Idea:* Set a time to do the circuit regularly (say, every other day). ●

Stick with fat-free milk

Encourage your youngster to drink several glasses of milk a day—but keep it fat-free. Your child will get the calcium she needs but not the fat that she doesn't. Consider these strategies:

- Buy only skim milk, and have her use it on cereal as well as for drinking.
- For variety, try other types of fat-free milk, such as rice or vanilla soy.
- Remind your child to drink fat-free milk with her school lunch. Whether she buys lunch or takes her own, she can pick up milk in the cafeteria. ●



Stocking your pantry

Want your children to eat healthier meals and snacks? Keeping the right foods and ingredients on hand is half the battle. Try these suggestions:

- Consult friends, online sites, or cookbooks for ideas on what to stock. Then, make your own list on a computer or smartphone or in a notebook. *Hint:* Include plenty of healthy snacks like rice cakes, baked crackers, and whole-grain cereal bars.



- Try to keep the healthiest foods at your children's eye level in the pantry and refrigerator. If they see the unsalted sunflower seeds or applesauce cups first, they'll be more likely to eat those than the chips they can't reach on the top shelf.
- Rotate what you buy so your youngsters can try new foods. You can make different kinds of whole grains for dinner, for example, if you have brown rice, quinoa, and whole-wheat couscous in the pantry.

ACTIVITY CORNER

Active fun indoors

When winter weather keeps your youngsters inside, they can still be active. Suggest these ideas.

- **Act out nursery rhymes or songs.** Your children could pile up pillows and go up the "hill" and tumble down like Jack and Jill. Or they could be the monkey and the weasel chasing each other "around the mulberry bush."



- **Make a color path.** Have your kids make a trail with different-colored socks (or pieces of construction paper). Then, take turns saying a color, and everyone has to follow the path stepping only on that color. *Variation:* Step on any color except the one called out.

- **Bring the outdoors inside.** Let them shoot baskets by wadding up newspaper and making shots into buckets or trash cans. They could also gently bounce a tennis ball up and down on a racquet. Or they might kick soccer balls softly into a goal like a doorway or under a table.



Note: Explain that some foods have to be used by a certain date. Then, when you're putting away groceries, ask your children to help you put the newer items in the back and the ones with the oldest dates in the front so they get used first.

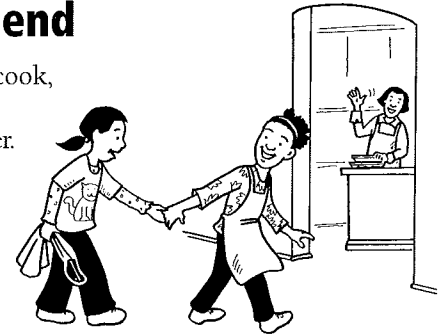
PARENT TO PARENT

Cooking with a friend

My daughter Grace loves to cook, so I wasn't surprised when she wanted to invite a friend over to cook together. We looked online for a fun—and healthy—recipe and came up with a great idea: ice cube-tray "sushi."

When her friend came over, they began by making the rice. (I suggested they use short-grain rice because it's sticky.) I let them measure and pour, and I handled the stove. While the rice cooked, they microwaved asparagus, green beans, and baby carrots to use for toppings. I also helped them make scrambled eggs.

After everything cooled, the girls sprayed an ice cube tray with nonstick cooking spray, put a topping in each section, and packed rice over it. They put the tray in the refrigerator for about five minutes, and then they popped out their sushi and ate. Grace's friend had so much fun that she has already invited my daughter over for a cooking playdate at her house!



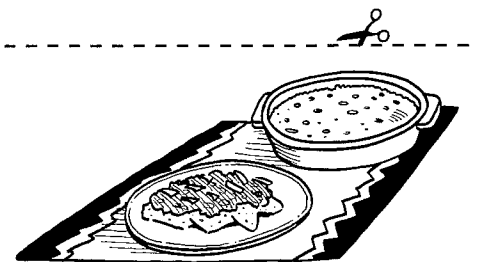
IN THE KITCHEN

Made by hand

Cooking and eating are extra fun when your child can use his hands. Make sure he washes his hands well, and try these recipes.

Peanut butter balls. Have your youngster mix 1 cup creamy peanut butter with 1/3 cup honey, 1 tsp. vanilla, and 1 cup crispy rice cereal. Then, let him roll them into small balls. Refrigerate for an hour.

Apple crumble. Slice 4 apples. Have him lay them in a baking dish and combine 1/3 cup flour, 1 cup rolled oats, 1/2 cup brown sugar, 1/2 tsp. salt, and



1 tsp. cinnamon. With his hands, he can work in 1/3 cup butter until the mixture is crumbly, then sprinkle it over the apples. Bake at 375° for 30 minutes.

Nachos. Let your child arrange baked tortilla chips on a microwave-safe plate. Then, have him add canned refried beans (fat-free) and shredded cheese on top. Microwave until the cheese melts.

OUR PURPOSE

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

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