

Nutrition Nuggets

Food and Fitness for a Healthy Child

Malta Avenue Elementary School
Mrs Sharon D'Agostino, Principal



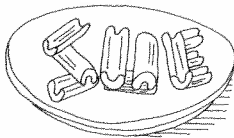
BEST BITES

No obstacle

For some fun exercise, help your youngster build an obstacle course. Use empty cereal boxes to scoot around, a table to crawl under, a large cardboard box to wiggle through, and a pile of pillows to dive into. The key? Create obstacles for your child to go over, under, through, and around.

Make it personal

Encourage your youngster 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.



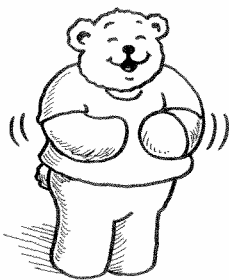
DID YOU KNOW?

Ingredients are listed in descending order on nutrition labels. So if sugar is first, the food has more sugar than anything else. When you're grocery shopping, make it a game for your child to find the top ingredient for one type of food or drink (granola, orange juice). You both might be surprised at how the order varies from brand to brand.

Just for fun

Q: What did the teddy bear say when he was offered dessert?

A: No, thanks. I'm stuffed!



Dinner strategies

Putting a healthy dinner on the table—and making it one that your children will like—can be a challenge. Try these ideas.

Assembly line

Have “do it yourself” nights where everyone builds their own meals. Set out ingredients for family favorites such as burgers, tacos, chili, rice bowls, or subs. Then, let each person “go through the line” to make her dinner. For instance, grill or broil burgers (beef, turkey, veggie), and place them on a plate. In separate bowls, put toppings like sliced tomatoes, lettuce, low-fat cheese, guacamole, and sautéed mushrooms or onions.



vegetables, and stir in a protein (tofu cubes, leftover cooked chicken or beef). Sprinkle with chopped peanuts, and serve over brown rice.

Simple prep

Do you pass up recipes with long cooking times? Reconsider! Look for dishes that require little prep time and then cook on their own. Crock pots are perfect for working parents: add ingredients before leaving in the morning, set to low heat, and come home to a cooked dinner. Or let a whole chicken roast in the oven while you do other things around the house. 🍷

Outside the box

Think beyond the “main course + two sides” formula. You might toss fresh spinach with cooked shrimp, thawed frozen peas, and canned (drained) corn and garbanzo beans for an entrée salad. Or make a one-pot stir-fry. Heat canola oil in a wok or skillet. Add fresh or frozen

“Anytime” or “sometimes” foods

Some foods are so healthy that your youngster can eat them anytime. Others might taste good but should only be eaten sometimes because they have more sugar or fat. Help your child understand the difference.

- Explain that foods like fruits, vegetables, low-fat or fat-free yogurt and milk, whole grains, and lean meats are nutritious and can be eaten every day. Foods like cookies and chips are high in sugar, fat, or salt, so your youngster should have them just once in a while.

- Have your child help you put away groceries. As he places each item in the pantry or refrigerator, he can say whether it's an “anytime” food or a “sometimes” food. *Idea:* Let him mark small, blank stickers with “A” for “anytime” or “S” for “sometimes.” He can label the foods for an easy reminder. 🍷



Thinking about commercials

When your child watches television, he's likely to see commercials for fast food, sweets, and salty snacks. How can you keep him from wanting all that food? Consider these strategies.

Talk about it. Do cartoon characters really eat chips? Will a certain brand of cereal actually make your youngster bigger and stronger? Watch commercials together, and encourage him to think about how advertisers get kids to want their products. This will help him feel more in control of the process.



Write an ad. Together, think of a few healthy foods your youngster likes. *Hint:* Ask him to name his favorite fruits and vegetables. Then, let him pick one and create an ad for it. He could design a billboard (on poster board), write a slogan, or even film a video commercial.

Reduce screen time. Limiting the amount of television that your

child watches will naturally cut the number of commercials he sees. You might record the shows he's allowed to watch and have him view them later, fast-forwarding through commercials. *Note:* Computer time can bring another set of ads for unhealthy foods. Consider setting parental controls, turning off pop-up ads, and monitoring your youngster's time on the computer. ●

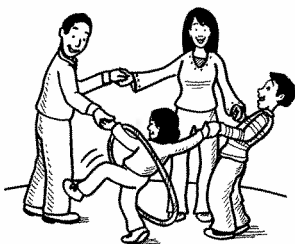
ACTIVITY CORNER

Hoop games

Spin it. Roll it. Jump into it. A hula hoop is a fun and inexpensive way to get your family moving. Try these activities:

- Challenge each other to do tricks while spinning the hula hoop. *Examples:* Stand on one foot, walk forward, walk backward, move in a circle, spin the hoop around your knees.

- Play Thread the Needle with family members or a group of friends. Stand



in a circle holding hands, with a hula hoop hanging from one person's arm. That person has to step through the hoop to pass it to the next player—without letting go of anyone's hand. The next player does the same thing, and so on until the hoop gets back to the first player.

- Hang a hula hoop from a tree branch or a clothesline. Have one player stand on each side, and throw a ball back and forth through the hoop. ●



IN THE KITCHEN

Making healthy smoothies

Here's a surefire way to get kids excited about eating healthfully. Toss fruit, a few ice cubes, yogurt, and juice into a blender, and mix until thick. With your supervision, your children can even do it themselves! Try these combinations.



Red & White—4 strawberries, 1 banana, 1 container low-fat vanilla yogurt, 1 cup orange juice

Cool Blue—1½ cups fresh or frozen blueberries, 1 container low-fat blueberry yogurt, 1 cup 100% grape juice

Just Peachy—1 cut-up peach or 1 cup frozen peaches, 1 container low-fat peach yogurt, ¾ cup orange juice

Tip: Add a teaspoon of wheat bran (available at your grocery or health food store) to put fiber into your youngsters' treats. ●

PARENT TO PARENT

Cafeteria changes

When our school sent home a notice that cafeteria meals were changing this year, I didn't think much about it. But then our son, Max, began saying the food was different and he had to "take all these vegetables."

I asked my sister-in-law, who works in a school cafeteria, what was going on. She told me there are new federal rules that require schools to serve more vegetables, fruits, and whole grains.

The point, she said, is to make school meals healthier.

She said we could help at home by offering two choices of vegetables and fruits at each meal and having Max try both. She also suggested that we ask him about the foods served in school and encourage him to taste them. We have been doing this, and it seems like Max is getting used to the new meals. The other day, he told us about the quinoa he had for lunch. He was proud to explain that it's pronounced *keen-wah*—and to say that he liked it! ●



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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