

Nutrition Nuggets™

Food and Fitness for a Healthy Child

September 2017



BEST BITES

Chalk up fitness

Boost your youngster's activity by having her draw a sidewalk-chalk fitness course. On a sidewalk or blacktop, she can create "obstacles," such as a ladder to "climb"



or a river to jump over. Then, she could write words like *cartwheel* or *crawl* beside her pictures to guide her and her friends along the course.

Pasta—or squash?

If your child likes playing with his food, he'll enjoy this low-carb and low-calorie pasta alternative. Cut a spaghetti squash in half, put it on a baking sheet (cut sides up), and bake 30 minutes at 400°. Cool slightly. Let your youngster use a fork to scrape the flesh and pull out spaghetti-like strands! Top with your favorite sauce.

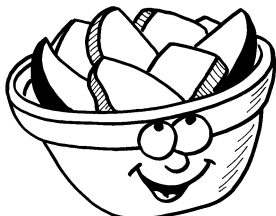
DID YOU KNOW?

Calcium plays a key role in strengthening your child's bones and teeth—and it's not just found in dairy products. Dark leafy greens also count toward the 1,000 mg of calcium your child needs each day. And look for the phrase "calcium-fortified" on orange juice, cereals, English muffins, and non-dairy "milk" (almond, soy, coconut).

Just for fun

Q: If I cut an apple into fourths and a pear into eighths, what will I get?

A: Fruit salad!

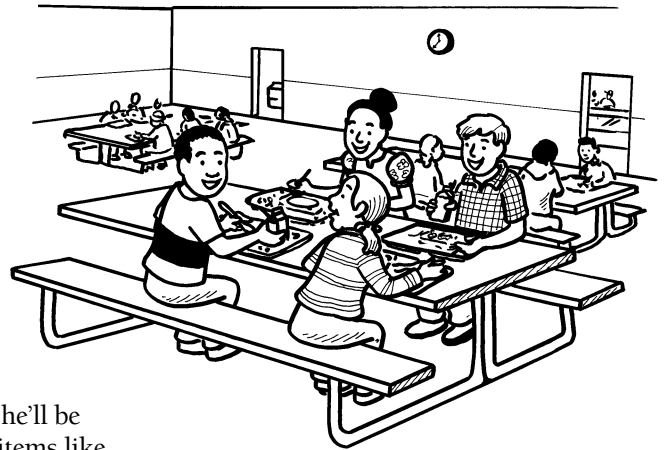


Dine out in the cafeteria

Does your child love to eat out? Do you want him to eat healthy foods during the school day? Encourage him to dine in the cafeteria!

Eat breakfast at school

Suggest that your youngster start a "breakfast club." He could meet friends in the cafeteria for a nutritious meal before school. It's easy and convenient—you won't need to make breakfast, and he'll be able to choose from healthy items like eggs, cereal, fruit, and milk.



Sample new fruits and veggies

What does kiwi taste like? How about radishes? The cafeteria is a great place to try different fruits and vegetables. Read the school menu together each week, and let your child circle foods to "taste test." After school, play a guessing game: He gives clues about items he sampled, and you identify them. *Example:* "White and crunchy," "tastes kind of like an apple" (jicama).

Serve "cafeteria foods"

Try making cafeteria foods at home to help your youngster get used to new flavors. For instance, coat skinless chicken pieces with whole-grain breading for healthier chicken nuggets. He'll be more likely to enjoy the flavor of whole grains if he also eats them outside of school.

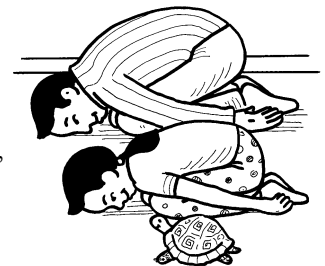
Note: Your family might qualify for free or reduced-price school meals. Look for a form in your child's backpack or on the school website. ♥

Stretch those muscles

March like a toy soldier, then tuck in like a turtle! Stretching improves your youngster's flexibility, and you can make it interesting with these playful stretches:

- Together, imagine that you're toy soldiers. Stand tall, and kick one leg high, trying to touch your toes with the opposite hand. Repeat with the other leg and arm, and alternate until you've crossed the room.
- Pretend to be turtles in their shells. Kneel with feet together, and sit back on your heels. Then bend over, touching your forehead to the floor with your arms along your sides. Hold for 15–30 seconds.

Note: To prevent injury, your child should warm up before stretching with five minutes of light aerobic exercise (dancing, walking). ♥



Healthy weeknight buffets at home

Make dinners easier—and more fun—by creating healthy do-it-yourself buffets ahead of time. Follow these steps.

1. Brainstorm. On the weekend, ask your child to help think of ideas for the week like a pizza buffet, a taco bar, or an Asian wrap station.

2. Shop. Have your youngster write or draw a grocery list for each buffet. For pizza, her list might include whole-wheat dough, turkey pepperoni, shredded mozzarella cheese, tomato sauce, and mushrooms.



3. Prep. On Sunday, work together to prep ingredients. Your child could roll out individual pizza crusts to pre-bake. Or you can cook lean ground beef for tacos while she drains and rinses canned black beans.

4. Store. Let your youngster put items for each buffet into individual containers. For Asian wraps, she might place diced grilled chicken, cooked brown rice, mandarin oranges, and peanut dressing into separate bowls.

5. Enjoy. At dinnertime, set out the ingredients for that night's buffet, along with anything else you need (tortillas, lettuce leaves, dressing). Reheat items if necessary. Then, family members can make their way through the line and customize their dinners! ●

ACTIVITY CORNER

Creative catches

Throwing and catching build your youngster's arm strength and improve her hand-eye coordination. Try these games for a catch-y twist.

Play hot potato

Don't be caught holding the ball when the music stops! Players toss a ball back and forth while one person stops the music every few throws. Whoever is holding the ball is the new DJ.

Count it out

Have your child throw a ball high in the air and count how many times she can clap her hands before catching the ball. Or take turns, and see who claps the most times.

Go for variety

Vary the "balls" you throw. Consider small pillows, bean bags, or socks filled with rice. *Idea:* Go outside and play catch with water balloons. ●



Q&A Get excited about PE

Q: My son doesn't like to participate in PE class because he says he's "not athletic." How can I help him get comfortable so he enjoys PE?

A: PE is a great opportunity for your son to run and play with classmates while he learns and stays active.

You could start by mentioning his hesitation to his PE teacher. She might suggest activities you can do at home or pair him up in class with a student who seems more confident about PE. Then, send the teacher occasional notes to check on his progress.

Also, visit a playground, and encourage your son to teach you skills he is learning or games he plays in class. As he shows you how he can do a chin-up or cross the balance beam, or explains the rules for kickball, he'll build confidence in his athletic ability. ●



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IN THE KITCHEN

Think outside the bottle

Salads can pack a lot of nutrition into one bowl. But store-bought dressing may add unwanted ingredients like preservatives, saturated fat, or MSG. With your youngster, whip up these good-for-you dressings.

● **Tahini.** Whisk together $\frac{1}{3}$ cup plain yogurt, 2 tsp. tahini, 1 tbsp. lime juice, $\frac{1}{2}$ tsp. oregano, $\frac{1}{2}$ tsp. cumin, and $\frac{1}{2}$ tsp. minced garlic. Pair with butter-head lettuce, chickpeas (canned, rinsed), and sliced cucumber.

● **Pico de gallo.** Combine 2 diced tomatoes, 1 small

diced onion, and 1 minced garlic clove in a bowl. Stir in 2–3 tsp. lime juice and $\frac{1}{4}$ cup chopped cilantro. Toss with shredded romaine lettuce, diced bell pepper, and avocado chunks.

● **Citrus.** Mix $\frac{1}{3}$ cup orange juice with 2 tsp. balsamic vinegar and 1 tsp. olive oil. Sprinkle over a salad of spinach, dried cranberries, and sliced almonds.

Note: Toss dressings with salad just before serving, or refrigerate for 3–4 days. ●



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BEST BITES

Mason jar omelet

Here's a fun breakfast to make with your youngster. Crack 2 eggs into a Mason jar. Add chopped veggies like bell pepper and tomatoes, plus 1 tsp. shredded cheese. Screw the lid on tightly, and let him shake it well. Remove the lid. Microwave 2–3 minutes until eggs are set. Cool, and enjoy. *Note:* You can also make this in a mug. Whisk the mixture instead of shaking.

Burpees for kids

Show your child how to do burpees, a great cardio exercise with a silly name.



Stand up straight, then squat down and place your hands palms-down in front of your feet. Kick back and do a push-up. Jump your feet back toward your hands and leap up. How many burpees can she do?

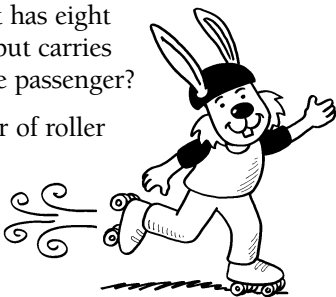
DID YOU KNOW?

Quinoa (pronounced “keen-wah”) is prepared like a grain, but it's actually a seed from the same plant family as spinach and beets. It packs a whopping 8 grams of protein and 5 grams of fiber in each 1 cup serving! Consider tossing cooked quinoa into your youngster's favorite soup, casserole, or salad for a healthy (and tasty) twist.

Just for fun

Q: What has eight wheels but carries only one passenger?

A: A pair of roller skates.



Encourage active time

Want to get your child away from video games, television, or computers? Try these tips for helping her spend less time in front of screens and more time being active.



Involve everyone

At breakfast, have family members talk about how they'll get exercise that day. You might mention a lunchtime walk you've planned with coworkers, and your youngster could explain a game she's going to play at recess. *Tip:* Let your child see you being active. When you put away your laptop and announce you're going for a run, you're setting a great example.

Set ground rules

Come up with rules that encourage physical activity and limit electronics. For example, you might require your youngster to do at least 60 minutes of physical activity before playing video games—and limit video game time to 30 minutes a day. Your child could write the rules on signs to post around the house, perhaps on the

Screen-free alternatives

Let your youngster plan activities that don't involve sitting in front of a screen. She might:

- create a workout routine that you can record for your family to follow along with later.
- map out new routes through your neighborhood for family bike rides.
- organize a neighborhood kickball or softball game.

front door or by the TV. Encourage her to use clever wording (“Turn me off. I need a break!”) and illustrations (a drawing of a tired TV). 🍎

A puzzle full of nutrition

Help your youngster “puzzle” out what a balanced meal looks like with this food-group activity.

First, talk about what makes up a healthy meal. *Tip:* Show him the MyPlate guide at choosemyplate.gov/myplate. He'll see that his plate should include about a quarter each of vegetables, fruits, grains, and protein. On a paper plate or a circle cut from construction paper, he could use crayons to draw a balanced meal. Maybe he'll include chicken, brown rice, green beans, and oranges.

Have your child cut the plate into puzzle pieces, and see if you can put his puzzle back together. Then, create more healthy food puzzles for each other to assemble. 🍎



Healthier fast food

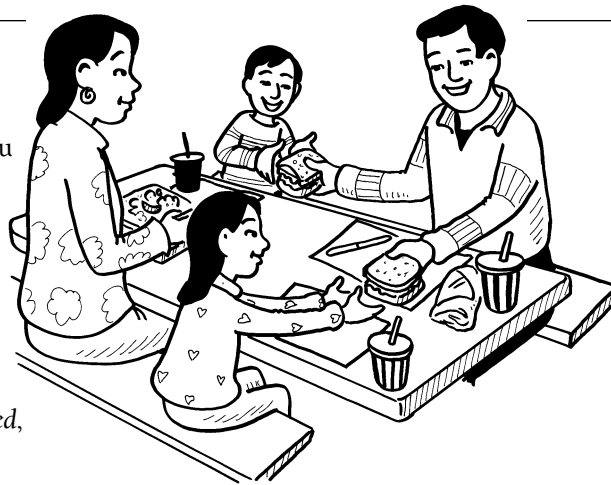
When your family's busy schedule leaves you eating on the fly, use these strategies to keep everyone's nutrition on track.

Know the facts

Teach your youngster to spot healthier menu items. Words and phrases to look for include *grilled*, *thin-crust*, *baked*, and *roasted*. On the other hand, he'll want to stay away from anything labeled *fried*, *loaded*, *stuffed*, or *bacon-wrapped*.

Split it

Your child asks for french fries, but you want him to eat carrot sticks. The solution? Order both! Get a small order of



fries for the whole family so everyone gets just a few—and several orders of carrots so everyone fills up on the good stuff. Or share an oversized sandwich. Ask for it with a whole-grain bun (or wrapped in lettuce), mustard instead of mayo, and extra veggies.

Bring your own

Grab a piece of fruit, string cheese, and a bottle of water for each person before leaving the house. You'll save money, *and* everyone will be guaranteed healthy side items and drinks to pair with your drive-thru order. ♥



PARENT TO PARENT Foods can't touch? No problem!

My daughter doesn't like it when the food on her plate touches—even if she loves each food.

After talking with other parents, I learned that my daughter isn't the only one like this. Now I'm trying strategies that have worked for them.



First, I let her spoon her foods into separate tiny bowls. She enjoyed arranging the bowls on her dinner plate, and she ate all the healthy foods—separately. Another time, she put colorful cupcake liners into a muffin tin and filled each one with a different food. Then, just yesterday, we used a carrot stick and a green bean to keep her food apart. When she finished everything else, she even ate the dividers!

With these simple changes, my daughter now eats without a fuss, making mealtimes happier for everyone. ♥

ACTIVITY CORNER

A fitness carnival

Homemade carnival-style games can be a fun and inexpensive way to be active with your child. Here are two ideas to get him started.

● **Ring toss.** Make rings by cutting the centers from sturdy paper plates. Line up a few pumpkins with good-sized stems. Step back a few feet, and take turns trying to toss a ring onto each pumpkin. *Idea:* For a glowing good time, get glow-in-the-dark necklaces at a dollar store to use as rings, and play after the sun goes down.



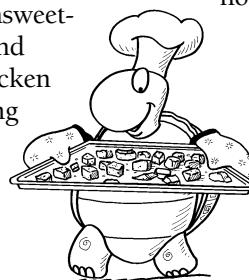
● **Cup pyramid.** Help your youngster build a pyramid with 10 plastic cups (four on the bottom row, then three, then two, and finally one cup on the top). On each turn, throw a Wiffle ball toward the pyramid twice, scoring 1 point for each cup knocked down. Restack. The winner is the first player to reach 50 points. ♥

IN THE KITCHEN

A harvest feast

Take advantage of fall's harvest with these good-for-you recipes.

● **Pumpkin apple soup.** In a large pot, heat 2 tbsp. olive oil over medium heat. Sauté 1 cup diced onion and 2 cups diced apples for 3–5 minutes. Add 3 cans (15 oz. each) unsweetened pumpkin puree and 5 cups low-sodium chicken or vegetable broth. Bring to a boil, then simmer 10 minutes. Leave chunky, or puree in a blender (a few cups at a time).



● **Pear grilled cheese.** Thinly slice 1 pear. On a piece of whole-wheat bread, layer 1 tbsp. shredded cheddar cheese, pear slices, and another 1 tbsp. cheese. Top with a second piece of bread, and brown in a heated skillet (coated with nonstick spray), 2–3 minutes per side.

● **Baked butternut squash.** Peel and cube 1 large squash, or buy it already cubed. Toss in a bowl with 1 tbsp. olive oil, spread on a baking sheet, and sprinkle with salt and pepper. Bake 30–40 minutes at 400°, turning once, until golden brown. ♥

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Count the ingredients

A long list of ingredients on a cereal box or a jar of pasta sauce often means the food is highly processed. At the grocery store, let your youngster compare several brands of an item on your list (say, cereal bars). She can count the ingredients in each—and put the one with the fewest ingredients in your cart.



Explore the great outdoors

Cooler temperatures offer the perfect opportunity to discover outdoor community “gems” with your child. Help him find local plants and animals while you walk along a trail or through a park or botanical garden. For extra fun and exercise, bring along helmets and explore on bikes, skateboards, or scooters (where permitted).

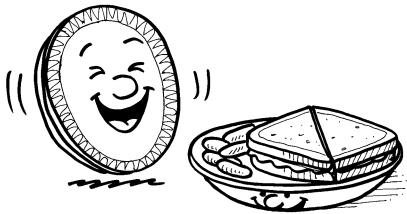
DID YOU KNOW?

November 6 is National Nachos Day. Make this popular appetizer healthier by using whole-grain tortilla chips and swapping plain Greek yogurt for sour cream. Melt real cheese on top (rather than store-bought queso). Then, add vegetables like chopped tomatoes, corn, shredded lettuce, and diced red onion.

Just for fun

Q: What did one plate say to another?

A: Lunch is on me.



Just add water (or milk)!

Does your child ask for juice boxes, soda, or sports drinks when he's thirsty? Loaded with sugar and calories, these choices offer little nutrition. The best way to quench his thirst is to drink water or milk. Try the following tips to encourage healthier beverage choices.

Make it motivating

Let your youngster choose a special cup at the dollar store to use only when he drinks milk or water. Or have him decorate a reusable water bottle. Using permanent markers, he can jazz up a plain bottle with his name, colorful pictures, and creative designs.

Add flavor

Enhance the flavor of water and milk with these healthy twists. Fill an ice cube tray with water, invite your child to add a flavor mix-in (a mint leaf, a pineapple chunk, a raspberry) to each compartment, and freeze. Then, he could choose a cube to flavor his water. When



he drinks milk, he might try stirring in a sprinkle of cinnamon or a few drops of vanilla extract.

Go for fizz

Your youngster may enjoy the fizzy effect of plain seltzer or sparkling water. With zero calories, sugar, or artificial colors or flavors, this bubbly water is fun to drink—without all the unhealthy stuff that's in soda. And seltzer is now sold in a variety of interesting natural flavors like mandarin orange, cucumber, and pomegranate. ●

Get your groove on

Keeping fit can be as simple as dancing! Put on music, and enjoy these ideas with your youngster.

● **Shadow dancing.** In a darkened room, have your child face a blank wall while someone else shines a flashlight on her from behind. She could create cool moves to make her shadow “dance.”

● **Chain reaction.** Build a dance sequence together. The first person does a simple movement like swinging her arms overhead. The next dancer copies that move, then adds one of her own. Take turns, each time repeating the sequence from the beginning and adding a new move at the end. ●



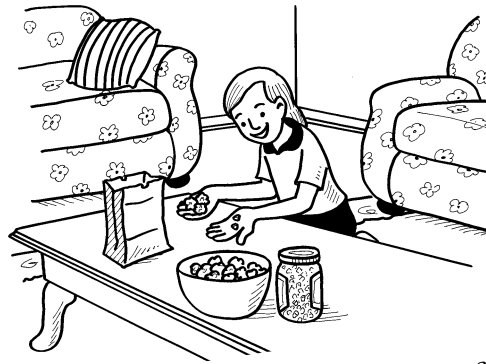
Science in the kitchen

Boost your youngster's enthusiasm for healthy eating with these hands-on experiments that weave in science fun.

"Egg-cellent" snack

Experiment: Let your child fill two glasses with water and add 1 tbsp. salt to one. Place a fresh egg in each. What happens? The egg in salt water will float. Why? (The egg is denser than plain water, but less dense than salt water.) *Note:* If the egg doesn't float, have her add 1 tsp. salt at a time until it does.

Eat: Hard-boiled eggs are a protein-rich snack. Place eggs in a saucepan, and cover with water. Put on a lid, boil 1 minute,



and remove from heat. Let sit covered for 12 minutes. Drain, rinse under cold water, and peel.

Popping perfection

Experiment: Have your youngster observe unpopped popcorn kernels. (They're small, brown, and hard.) Then, she should place $\frac{1}{4}$ cup kernels in a paper lunch bag and fold the top over a few times.

Microwave 2–3 minutes, pour into a bowl, and let her observe again: The kernels are big, white, and fluffy! What happened? (Kernels contain water that turns into steam when heated. Steam expands, making the kernels explode.)

Eat: Popcorn is a healthy whole grain. Instead of salt, sprinkle with Parmesan cheese, garlic powder, or paprika. ♥

Q&A

DIY convenience foods

Q: Our grocery store stocks precut vegetables and other time-saving items, but they're too expensive for my budget! Any suggestions?

A: With a little planning, you can make your own convenience foods at home.

On week-ends, ask your child to help you prep vegetables for the week. For



example, wash and dry lettuce, and place in a covered container with a dry paper towel to absorb moisture. You can also wash, chop, and store firm veggies like carrots, broccoli, and cauliflower.

Cook chicken pieces or portions of meat, and seal in zipper bags to use within 2–3 days. You can even make pasta or rice in advance. Toss with olive oil so it doesn't get sticky, and put in an airtight container.

Your refrigerator will resemble the prepared-foods case at the grocery store—but you won't spend any extra money. ♥



ACTIVITY CORNER

Fitness: It's in the cards!

Put a clever twist on physical activity by helping your youngsters make their own deck of family fitness cards. Here's how.

Together, come up with at least a dozen active ideas that can be done in less than five minutes. Be as creative or silly as you like! Write each one on the front of a separate index card. For example:

- Hop on one foot for one minute while holding the other foot with one hand and pinching your nose. Switch feet and hop for one more minute.
- Lie on your stomach, and pretend to swim like a frog for three minutes.
- Hold hands with a partner. Skip back and forth across the room five times.



On the back of each card, your children can illustrate the activity. Put the cards into a box, and pull one out whenever it's time for a burst of activity! ♥

IN THE KITCHEN

Healthier holiday classics

No need to forgo favorite Thanksgiving dishes. Consider these better-for-you versions.

● **Green bean casserole.** For the topping, toss 1 chopped onion and $\frac{1}{2}$ cup sliced fresh mushrooms with 2 tbsp. whole-wheat breadcrumbs. Spread mixture on a greased baking sheet, and bake 10–15 minutes at 400° or until browned. Microwave 12 oz. fresh or frozen green beans, transfer to a dish, and add topping.

● **Cranberry-orange sauce.** In a medium saucepan, combine 10 oz. fresh cranberries, 1 cup water, $\frac{1}{3}$ cup honey, 2 tbsp. grated

orange rind, $\frac{1}{4}$ cup orange juice, $\frac{1}{2}$ tsp. cinnamon, and $\frac{1}{4}$ tsp. allspice. Boil, reduce heat, and simmer 20 minutes until mixture thickens.

● **Sage-couscous stuffing.** Cook 1 cup whole-wheat pearl couscous according to package directions. Then, heat 2 tbsp. olive oil in a large skillet over medium heat. Add $\frac{1}{2}$ cup each diced onion, celery, and carrots. Saute until soft. Stir in couscous, 1 tbsp. fresh sage, and $\frac{1}{2}$ tsp. each salt and pepper. ♥



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