

Central Islip Union Free School District
Lawrence S. Phillips, Director of PE, Health & Athletics

BEST BITES



Musical meals

Playing background music during family meals can lighten the mood and make eating together feel like a special occasion. Take turns letting family members select a radio station or playlist. Your children will enjoy being at the dinner table more—and might stay longer for nice conversation and nutritious food.

DID YOU KNOW?

While a salad bar often seems like the healthiest choice when eating out, the ingredients can make all the difference in the world. Toppings like macaroni salad, bacon bits, croutons, and dressing, for example, can pile on calories and fat. Teach your youngster to reach for fresh fruit and vegetables first and to go easy on the other items.

Keep your balance



Use everyday tasks to help your child develop a better sense of balance. Challenge him to brush his teeth while standing on one leg. Or have him get dressed with his eyes closed. He'll improve his coordination, which will give him confidence when he plays sports and does physical activities.

Just for fun

Q: What do vegetables wear when they get married?

A: Onion rings.



Breakfast questions

Breakfast can set the tone for your youngster's whole day. When she eats a healthy breakfast, her brain "wakes up" and gets ready to work and play. Here are answers to questions you might have about this important meal.

When should my child eat breakfast?

It's best if she eats within an hour or so of waking up. But not everyone likes to eat right away. Experiment with having her eat before and after getting dressed. Or she might have a piece of fruit when she wakes up and then have a grain (oatmeal, whole-wheat toast) and dairy (fat-free milk, low-fat cheese) before she heads out the door. Another good idea is to let her eat breakfast at school. She can choose a healthy option in the cafeteria, and she'll have fun eating with her friends.

What breakfast foods will keep her going until lunch?

Encourage your youngster to eat something from at least three of the food groups (fruits, vegetables, grains, protein, dairy). Help her avoid sugary foods—they cause



an immediate rise in blood sugar, but when the levels drop in about an hour, she'll feel less energetic and be hungry again. *Note:* Breakfast should give your child a quarter of her calories and nutrients for the day.

Our mornings are rushed! What can I make ahead?

You could hard-boil eggs in advance, and your youngster can peel and eat one or two for breakfast. Wash grapes or slice oranges the night before and refrigerate. Or make egg dishes that keep well, such as breakfast burritos or quiche (fill a whole-wheat pie crust with whisked eggs, shredded cheese, and vegetables, and bake). ♡

Dessert know-how

Who doesn't like sweets? The trick is not to avoid desserts altogether, but to limit them to every now and then. These tips can help:

- Serve dessert with dinner only occasionally. That way, your child won't expect something sweet to finish each meal.
- Add a twist to fruit. For instance, shave dark chocolate on top of strawberry slices or raspberries. You could also melt dark chocolate, dip in cut-up fruit (bananas, apples, pineapple), and refrigerate until set. Or sprinkle brown sugar on grapefruit halves, and broil until bubbly.
- Go out for dessert rather than keeping cookies, cake, and ice cream at home. Your youngster can have a treat, but he won't be tempted to keep treating himself all week long! ♡



All in the presentation

Encouraging your child to eat healthy foods can be as simple as making the foods look more inviting. Consider these ideas.

Polka dots

With a melon baller, your youngster can make mix-and-match fruit. Let him scoop a few holes from an apple and a pear. Then, he can put the apple balls into the pear holes and the pear balls into the apple holes. Have him try this with red and green apples, cantaloupe and honeydew, or any other combination he can come up with.

Garnishes

You might think of garnishes as things that only caterers use. But you and your child can add healthy garnishes to food at home, too. A younger child could arrange patterns



of grape tomatoes and olives on a platter of fish or chicken. An older one might decorate a bowl of broccoli or green beans with carrot curls—help him use a vegetable peeler to shave carrot strips and place them in ice water to make them curl.

Containers

Eating out of fun containers can inspire your youngster to try foods he normally stays away from. Serve salad in a small (clean) flowerpot. Rinse Chinese takeout boxes, layer whole-wheat pasta and vegetables inside, and add chopsticks. Or put plastic toy eggs in a clean egg carton, and fill each one with a few bites of food like turkey chunks, edamame, and brown rice. ♥

ACTIVITY CORNER

Alternatives to TV

Your youngster gets home from school. Bored, she wanders over to the television and flips it on. But wait! Wouldn't it be more fun—and healthier—for her to do something? Suggest activities like these:

1. Go roller skating or ice skating.
2. Play hopscotch.
3. Have a pillowcase race (each person stands in a pillowcase, holds the edges, and jumps to the finish line).
4. Build an indoor or outdoor fort.
5. Ride a scooter.
6. Go sledding.
7. Put on a play.
8. Practice throwing a ball in the air and catching it.
9. Take binoculars outside, and go on a nature walk to look for animals and birds.
10. Make up a new version of tag.



Idea: Tape the list to the TV, and invite your child to add more ideas. ♥



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 and get kids in the habit of eating more nutritious foods.

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! ♥



IN THE KITCHEN

Muffin-tin recipes

You can use a muffin tin for so much more than muffins and cupcakes. Try these clever creations for meals and snacks.

Note: For each recipe, coat muffin cups with nonstick cooking spray first.

Mini meat loaves. Mix 1 lb. lean ground turkey with 1 egg (beaten), $\frac{1}{4}$ cup quick-cooking oats, 1 tbsp. ketchup, 1 tsp. Worcestershire sauce, and $\frac{1}{8}$ tsp. pepper. Divide the mixture among 8 muffin cups, and bake at 375° for 30 minutes.

Avocado eggs. Put an avocado half (cut to fit, if

necessary) in a muffin cup, and crack an egg into it. Bake at 350° for 10–15 minutes, until egg reaches desired doneness.

Tacos. Cut whole-wheat tortillas into small circles, and press in the muffin cups (they should go up the sides). In a skillet, brown 1 lb. lean ground beef, and add 1 tsp. chili powder, 1 tsp. paprika, $\frac{1}{2}$ tsp. cumin, and $\frac{1}{4}$ tsp. oregano. Put the meat mixture into the cups, and top with shredded cheddar cheese.

Bake at 350° for 20 minutes. Serve with salsa. ♥



O U R P U R P O S E

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
540-636-4280 • rfeustomer@wolterskluwer.com
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