

Nutrition Nuggets

Food and Fitness for a Healthy Child

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Central Islip Union Free School District
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BEST BITES

Kale chips

Get your children eating healthy kale by turning it into chips. Tear the leaves into bite-size pieces, toss with a little olive oil and sea salt, and spread on a cookie sheet. Bake at 375° about 15 minutes, until crispy. Kale is low in fat and a good source of fiber, protein, minerals, and vitamins.

DID YOU KNOW?

Your youngster is more likely to be physically active if his friends are. While he will choose friends for many reasons, encourage him to spend some time with children who are active. If you see kids playing outside, suggest that he join them. Or have him invite over classmates who enjoy sports.

Nutrition read-aloud



For a cozy nutrition lesson, read your child a book about healthy foods. In *The Ugly Vegetables* by Grace Lin, a girl is disappointed when her neighbor's garden yields beautiful flowers while her family's garden grows bumpy vegetables. But then those vegetables turn into a delicious soup for the whole neighborhood to enjoy! *Note:* Ask your school librarian for more book suggestions.

Just for fun

Q: What did the strawberry say to the blueberry?

A: Nothing. Strawberries can't talk!



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

Managing food allergies

Does your youngster have a food allergy? Help him take charge of it with these suggestions:

- Have him make a “Food Allergy Card” to show to waiters or friends’ parents when eating out. For example, he might write, “I’m allergic to eggs,” and draw a picture of an egg carton. Add emergency contact information in case of an allergic reaction.

- Let him see you reading food labels and asking about ingredients at the carryout counter. He’ll learn that he needs to check carefully—and that it’s okay to do so.

- Together, talk to your child’s teacher, school nurse, cafeteria manager, coach, and activity leaders. Create a plan for managing his allergy at school, including emergency instructions. You can discuss arrangements for class parties and field trips so he doesn’t feel left out. ♥



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. ♥

PARENT TO PARENT

When PE causes anxiety...

If you ask my older boys what their favorite school subject is, they shout, "PE!" But for my youngest son, PE is a struggle. Since Sam is overweight and not too athletic, I think he feels embarrassed or is afraid other kids will laugh at him.

When school started this year, I spoke with his PE teacher.

The teacher thought that helping Sam prepare for activities could make



a difference. So now, before each unit begins, we discuss it at home. We might get library books or watch videos or live games, and then we try playing the sport.

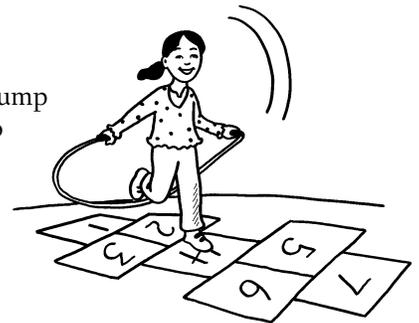
I keep things casual and fun—if I miss a ball, I'll laugh it off or make a lighthearted comment like, "Oops! Didn't see that one coming!" I'm hoping Sam will see that physical activity can be fun, even if he's not the "best" in the class. ♥

ACTIVITY CORNER

Skipping rope

World-class athletes often jump rope in their training—and so can your youngster. Here are fun ways to incorporate jumping rope into her daily playtime:

- Let your child draw a hopscotch board on a sidewalk, driveway, or playground blacktop. To play, she can throw a stone into a block and skip rope to the target.
- Encourage her to set challenges for herself. She might count how many times she can skip rope without stopping. Then, have her try to beat that number. Or she could try to jump for 1 minute, and when she has mastered that, move to 1½ minutes, then 2.
- Jump rope rhymes are always popular. Help your youngster look up rhymes she can memorize and say while she and a friend skip rope. Suggest that they chant the rhymes faster to adjust their rhythm and speed—and get their hearts pumping faster! ♥



IN THE KITCHEN

Beyond pumpkin pie

'Tis the season for pumpkins. In addition to picking pumpkins or carving a jack-o-lantern, you can add healthy pumpkin to some of your children's favorite foods. Here's how:

- Mix canned pumpkin into pancake batter.
- Toss together unsalted pepitas (pumpkin seeds), unsalted nuts, and dried fruits for a fall trail mix.
- Make pumpkin chicken nuggets. Mix ¼ cup canned pumpkin with 2 tbsp. water.

Dredge chicken strips first in flour, then in the pumpkin mixture, and finally in whole-wheat bread crumbs. Bake at 400° for about 20 minutes, until cooked through.

- Try pumpkin pudding. Stir canned pumpkin and a pinch of cinnamon into fat-free vanilla pudding.

Note: For canned pumpkin, be sure to use "pure" pumpkin or pumpkin puree rather than pumpkin pie filling, which has added sugar, salt, and other ingredients. ♥



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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