

Nutrition Nuggets

Food and Fitness for a Healthy Child

May 2010

Kennedy School



BEST BITES

Looks good!

Make healthy food appealing to your youngster with creative packaging at home. You might store whole-grain crackers in a cookie jar, for example. Or keep fruit in a bowl your child made at a paint-your-own pottery shop. For a treat, bake blueberry muffins in mini-cupcake tins and use liners printed with fun patterns (soccer balls, balloons).



DID YOU KNOW?

Fitness habits set in childhood tend to stick with a person for a lifetime. To help your youngster become an active adult, encourage her to be active now. Try to build exercise into family time by going swimming, taking hikes, and walking rather than driving whenever you can. Also, suggest that she play outside and participate in sports.

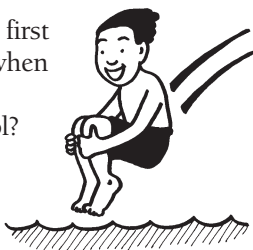
Healthy shopping

When you go to the grocery store, “shop the perimeter” first. The outside aisles are where you’ll usually find fresh produce, healthy dairy products (fat-free milk, yogurt, and cheese), and fresh meats, chicken, and fish. Fill your cart mostly with those items, and then get what you need from the middle of the store.

Just for fun

Q: What is the first thing you do when you jump in a swimming pool?

A: Get wet!

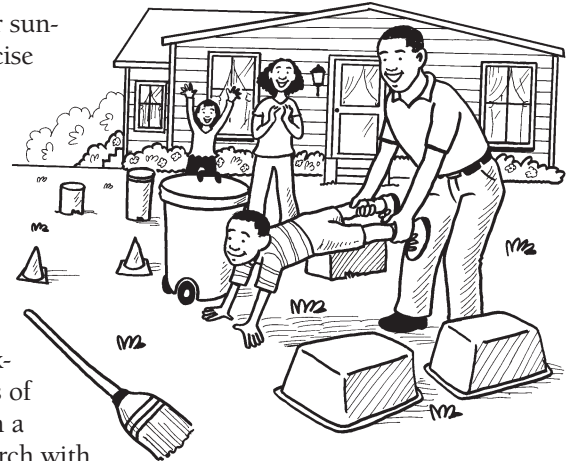


Active all summer

Take advantage of the summer sunshine to help your child get exercise and have fun. Here are ways he can build endurance, strength, and flexibility—three types of training that are important for children and adults.

Keep moving. Boost your youngster’s endurance with aerobic exercise that will get his heart pumping faster. In the backyard or at a park, call out a series of fun directions. *Examples:* “Run in a rectangle.” “Fly like a bird.” “March with your knees high.” “Walk on your heels.” When your child has friends over, suggest running games like tag or relay races. As a family, go biking or skating.

Be a wheelbarrow. Have your youngster “walk” with his hands, and he’ll build arm strength. Together, set up an outdoor obstacle course with soccer cones, recycling bins, or trash cans. Then, hold your child by his ankles, and have him use his hands to move around the obstacles. *Idea:* Let your youngster and his



friends set up a course and take turns steering each other through it.

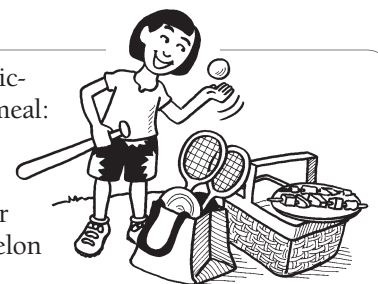
Bend and stretch. To make muscles more flexible, children need to stretch. See if your youngster can spell his name with stretches—he’ll have to bend his body into the shape of each letter. Or have him think of stretches that start with as many letters of the alphabet as he can. He might “arch” for A, “dip” for D, “lunge” for L, or “reach” for R. Other ways to stretch: do cartwheels, practice splits, or try to dunk a basketball. ♥

Picnic time

Ready to pack the cooler and head out for a picnic? Here are suggestions for a healthy outdoor meal:

- Have a meal-on-a-stick. On a wooden skewer, thread cubes of ham and cheese, pineapple chunks, and squares of red bell pepper. For dessert, make fruit skewers with strawberries, melon chunks, and grapes.
- Take ingredients for wraps, and let family members make their own. You might pack a bag of whole-wheat tortillas, a container of tuna or chicken salad, a package of shredded lettuce, and boxes of raisins.
- Pack balls, bats, and Frisbees so you can mix in physical activity. Or picnic near a playground with equipment for your youngsters to climb on.

Note: Be sure to use ice or freezer packs to keep perishable food cold. ♥



Fast food—keep it healthier

Fast doesn't have to mean unhealthy. With tips like these, your family can make smart choices at fast-food restaurants:

- Your child can still get a kid's meal with a toy and a fun bag. But make it healthier by having her pick milk or water instead of soda, and fruit or salad rather than French fries. *Tip:* Give her only healthy choices ("Would you like milk or water?"). If soda isn't an option, she won't drink it.



- Point out grilled burgers or grilled chicken sandwiches on the menu. Have her skip the cheese and "special sauces" (they tend to be high in fat). Suggest that she ask for mustard instead.

- Encourage your youngster to order an entrée salad. But make sure she gets low-fat dressing—regular dressing can have the same calories and fat as a hamburger! Also, she'll use less dressing if she gets it on the side and uses it as a dip.

- Recommend soft tacos or bean and chicken burritos when you order Mexican food. Teach your child to ask for low-fat cheese, just a little guacamole, and extra salsa instead of sour cream. Also, try to skip the tortilla chips—they're probably fried. ♥

Q & A Same foods every day?

Q: My child only wants cereal and pasta. How can I get her to eat different foods?

A: Start by asking her to try just a bite of a new food—having to eat a whole portion might seem overwhelming. If she tries it and doesn't like it, don't make a big deal about it. Youngsters often have to try a food many times before they enjoy it.



Also, you might offer new foods in different forms. For example, try raw baby carrots one day, roasted carrots another day, and carrot soup another time.

Finally, involve your child in picking out and preparing food. At the supermarket, talk about the color and texture of fruits and vegetables, and have her select ones to take home. Or let her choose the dinner menu and help cook it. Chances are she'll try foods when she has played a part in preparing the meal. ♥

ACTIVITY CORNER

Make an activity pyramid

The food pyramid shows your youngster how many servings he should have each day from different food groups. Let him make an activity pyramid, and he'll have his own guide to healthy exercise.

Have him draw a large triangle and divide it into four different-sized sections by adding three horizontal lines. Then, he can label each section with how often he should do the activities. *Example:* The largest section can be for "every day" and the smallest for "occasionally." Finally, help him brainstorm activities to write in each block. Here's a sample:

Every day: Take a walk. Play outside. Clean up my room. Help in the yard. Walk the dog.

3–5 times a week: Play sports. Go skateboarding. Run. Jump rope. Dance.

2–3 times a week: Practice tumbling. Do push-ups, pull-ups, and sit-ups. Use a rock-climbing wall.

Occasionally: Watch TV. Play video or computer games. ♥



IN THE KITCHEN

Corn-ucopia

Add corn to your table with these summer recipes. You'll also be adding a healthy dose of fiber, vitamins A and C, and antioxidants to your family's diet.

On the grill. Let your youngster peel back the husk and remove the silk from ears of corn. Then, have him brush a little olive oil or melted butter on the corn and close up the husks. Wrap in aluminum foil, and place on the grill.



Cook about 30 minutes, turning a few times, until the corn is tender.

In a salad. Husk 4 ears of corn, and cook in boiling water for 3 minutes. Drain, cool, and cut off the kernels. Combine with 1 lb. cooked green beans and 1 cup grape tomatoes. Mix 2 tbsp. olive oil and 1 tbsp. apple cider vinegar, and toss with the vegetables. Let stand for 30 minutes so the flavors can blend. ♥



OUR PURPOSE

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

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