

Nutrition Nuggets

Food and Fitness for a Healthy Child

March 2020

Worcester County Public Schools

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BEST BITES

Positive peer pressure

When your youngster eats with friends at school or at home, encourage her to notice healthy foods they enjoy. She may be inspired to try something new, such as collard greens, polenta, or artichokes, just by seeing a friend eat it.



Act out the weather

What's the weather outside? Let your child show you, instead of telling you, with this active idea. Have him look outside and then "become" the weather. He might whirl around fast like the wind, stomp his feet and pound his arms for thunder, or dance with his arms outstretched on a sunny day.

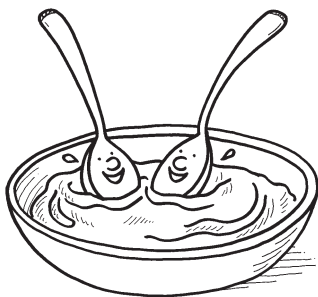
DID YOU KNOW?

Oregano is full of antioxidants, which can boost your youngster's immune system and help her stay healthy. Try adding fresh or dried oregano to salads and grilled meats or fish. Your child may like the flavor because it reminds her of pizza!

Just for fun

Q: What did one spoon say to the other?

A: Let's stir things up!



Calcium counts

How can you get your child to eat more calcium? Appeal to his desire to be strong! Let him know that calcium builds strong bones for playing and growing. Then, try these ideas.

Fill a bank

Encourage your youngster to make a "calcium bank." First, turn a plastic milk jug on its side and cut a slit in it. Next, help him find magazine pictures of foods with calcium (milk, cheese, dark-green leafy vegetables). He could cut them out and glue them all over his bank. Each time he eats one of those foods, he puts a coin in the slot.

Add to every meal

Get your child used to having calcium throughout the day. Point out calcium-rich foods he's already eating (milk in his breakfast cereal, grilled cheese for lunch), and help him think of more he could have (baby spinach



in his sandwich, yogurt and fruit for dessert). *Tip:* Adding an 8-oz. glass of nonfat milk to a meal gives him another serving of calcium.

Cook with calcium

Add calcium to your youngster's diet by cooking with dairy products and foods that contain calcium. For instance, use nonfat milk instead of water when heating up canned tomato or mushroom soup. Melt Parmesan cheese onto cooked zucchini or green beans. Put tofu into a stir-fry, or stir white beans into chili. ♥

Celebrate spring!

Enjoy the first day of spring on March 19, and get some exercise, by heading outdoors with your youngster. Here's how.

1. Take a walk. Look for signs of spring. Does your child hear woodpeckers pecking on trees or spot buds on bushes?

2. Visit a farm. Your youngster may see newborn lambs or other baby animals. Plus, some farms have play areas where she could climb on hay bales or play beanbag toss.

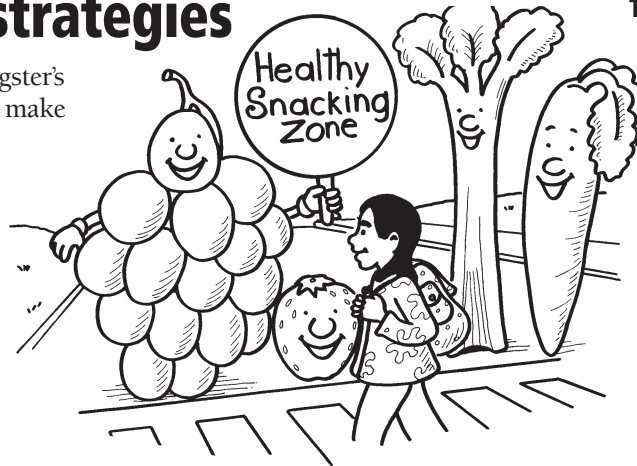
3. Do spring cleaning. Ask your child to help you wash the car or clean out the garage. She could also hose down her bike and outdoor toys. ♥



Better snacking strategies

The right snacks satisfy your youngster's hunger in a healthy way. Teach her to make smart choices with these tips.

Pack smart. Send nutritious snacks that are appealing, portable, and easy to eat when your child is away from home. Many kids love finger foods like grapes, baby carrots, and string cheese. (Include an ice pack to keep cold foods cold.) *Note:* Be sure to follow her school's policy on snacks.



Think beyond "snack foods."

Foods your youngster normally eats at breakfast, lunch, and dinner can be snacks, too.

Together, think of examples, such as whole-grain toast with almond butter, a salad, or mini turkey meatballs.

Establish good habits. Help your child develop healthy snacking habits to avoid overeating or making poor food choices. You might limit snacking to the kitchen table and put away electronics while you eat. Also,

look at packages together to find and measure out the healthy serving size. ♥

ACTIVITY CORNER

Scarf games

Get two lightweight scarves (or cloth napkins) for these games that will boost your child's coordination.

● **Catch.** Take turns throwing a scarf in the air for the other person to catch. The scarf will float slowly to the ground, giving him time to catch it. This is a great way to build confidence as your youngster's catching skills improve.



● **Copycat.** Have each player hold a scarf, and take turns adding movements for each other to copy. Your child might do big arm circles with his scarf. You mimic him, then add a move, perhaps swooshing your scarf behind your back. Keep going, repeating all the previous movements and tacking on your own. When someone can't remember a move, the other player wins. ♥



Q&A Pasta every day?

Q: My daughter would eat the same foods every day if I let her—especially pasta. How can I get her to branch out?

A: It's normal for kids to prefer familiar foods, but a balanced diet will give your child a variety of nutrients.

Try starting with foods she likes and make small adjustments. For instance, serve spaghetti squash or "zoodles" (zucchini noodles) with your daughter's favorite pasta sauce. Or add chopped broccoli to macaroni and cheese.

You might also offer a new food as an appetizer before a meal, when your youngster is hungrier. Set out cucumber slices with a dip she'll eat, for instance.

Finally, keep in mind that it may take a dozen attempts or more before a child accepts a new food—so keep serving them in different ways until you find a winner! ♥



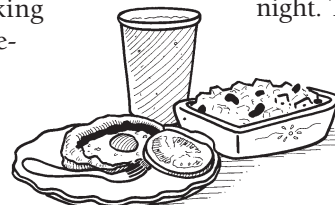
IN THE KITCHEN

Wake up with veggies

Fruit, toast, milk, eggs ... which food group is missing from that typical breakfast lineup? Vegetables! Round out your child's morning meal with these recipes.

Egg in a cap

Place a large portobello mushroom (stem and gills removed) upside down on a foil-lined baking sheet. Crack an egg carefully into the cap and bake at 375° for 15–20 minutes, until set. Top with chopped tomato.



Green smoothie

Let him blend 1 cup fresh spinach, 1 banana, 1 cup fat-free milk, ½ cup frozen cauliflower, and 1 tsp. each vanilla extract and honey.

Breakfast potatoes

Thaw 3 cups frozen potatoes (shredded or cubed) in the refrigerator overnight. Toss with 1 cup black beans and ½ cup each diced green and red peppers. Spread on a lightly greased baking sheet. Bake at 400° for 30 minutes. ♥

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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