

Nutrition Nuggets

Food and Fitness for a Healthy Child

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Worcester County Public Schools
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BEST BITES

Festivals of food

Explore new foods with your child by attending food festivals this spring. Whether they feature peaches or persimmons, crawfish or crepes, strawberries or salmon, these events showcase interesting foods from farmers, vendors, or restaurants. Look for ones with free admission—and enjoy the free samples!

Spring cleaning

With winter in the rearview mirror, April is a good time for active spring cleaning. Together, list indoor and outdoor tasks that will get everyone moving. For instance, your youngster might work with you to wash windows or move winter coats into storage. Outdoors, he could sweep porches or clear sticks from the yard.



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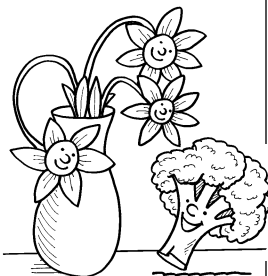
DID YOU KNOW?

Three types of fitness are important for children (and adults): endurance, strength, and flexibility. Encourage your child to develop all three with a variety of activities. Aerobic sports like soccer or swimming will help improve endurance. Sit-ups and push-ups can build strength. And dancing, gymnastics, and yoga all promote flexibility.

Just for fun

Q: What kind of flower doesn't go in a vase?

A: Cauliflower!



Solutions for picky eating

Help your youngster choose to be less choosy about food! Consider these strategies to add variety to his diet.

Pass dishes around

Rather than putting bowls in the middle of the dinner table, pass each one from person to person. When a dish is passed to your child, the aroma may tempt him to try it. Or he might be more likely to serve himself a little just because it's in his hands. If not, at least he'll see others take the food. And over time, his curiosity may get the better of him.

Use a "food chain"

Slowly offer your youngster a series of foods that build on ones he already enjoys. Say he loves boxed macaroni and cheese. Start by replacing the powdered cheese with the real thing ($\frac{1}{2}$ cup grated cheddar). The next time, add pureed butternut squash or broccoli



to the mac 'n' cheese. Finally, serve just the pureed squash or broccoli.

Try, try again

Your child won't touch steamed green beans? Offer raw green beans with a yogurt-dill dip. Eggplant a no-go? Make it into "fries." (Cut a 1-pound eggplant into strips $\frac{1}{2}$ -inch wide, and toss with $\frac{1}{2}$ tsp. salt. Dip the pieces into 1 whisked egg white, then in breadcrumbs, and roast at 425° for 15 minutes.) In other words, try different ways of preparing foods, and eventually you'll hit on ones your youngster enjoys. ♥

Track family fitness—in color

Let your child encourage your family to get fit—15 minutes at a time. Here's how.

1. Have her choose colored beads to represent different physical activities. She can draw a key, such as "Blue beads = walking the dog" and "Red beads = shooting hoops." Then, each family member could decorate her own "fitness jar."
2. Each person should aim for at least four 15-minute bursts of physical activity a day. For every one, she puts a matching bead in her container. The goal is to exercise at least an hour a day, or 7 hours a week.
3. Ask your youngster to count the beads weekly. Empty your jars, and start exercising again! ♥



Grow a garden

Get your youngster excited about the joys of gardening—and the fun of eating what she grows—with these suggestions.

Research. Build enthusiasm, and learn the basics, with a visit to the library. Read children's books like *Roots, Shoots, Buckets & Boots* (Sharon Lovejoy) to find out about everything from seed selection to themed gardens. Your librarian can recommend titles.



Plan. Together, figure out where you could put a garden. You might have room in your yard, opt for pots on a porch, or sign up for a plot in a community garden. Then, visit a nursery to choose seeds or plants. The clerks will help you and your youngster pick vegetables to suit your space and sunlight.

Tend. Your child will get a nice workout by planting and caring for her garden. After she digs and plants, she'll need to weed and water regularly to help her plants thrive. And, in turn, you can tell her that eating her home-grown veggies will help her grow and thrive, too! 🍓



PARENT TO PARENT Cutting out soda

I recently read an article on childhood obesity that got me worried about how much soda my son Max was drinking. I talked to the school nurse, and she gave me good ideas for cutting back.

First, she suggested that I show Max what's actually in soda. I put a 12-ounce can on the table.



Then, I had him measure out 10 tsp. of sugar and said, "That's how much sugar is in that can of soda." I asked if he would want to eat all that sugar at once—and boy, did he make a face! So I mentioned he could picture that pile when he wanted soda.

The nurse also said we could simply make soda less available. If we don't buy it, then he won't drink it at home. And when we eat out, I give him a choice of water or milk. I know it will take time, but Max is beginning to get used to the change. 🍓

IN THE KITCHEN

Just add raisins

April 30th is National Raisin Day. To honor this wrinkly, good-for-you fruit, enjoy recipes like these all month long.

Carrot salad

Shred 5 peeled carrots and $\frac{1}{2}$ head red cabbage. Then, make a dressing by whisking together 2 tbsp. lemon juice and 3 tbsp. olive oil. Toss the carrots and cabbage with the dressing and $\frac{1}{2}$ cup raisins.

Baked chicken

In a large ovenproof skillet, brown 2 chicken quarters in 1 tbsp. canola oil. Add $\frac{1}{2}$ cup golden raisins, 1 chopped tomato, $\frac{1}{2}$ tsp. dried thyme, and $1\frac{1}{2}$ cups low-sodium chicken broth. Bake uncovered at 375° for 45 minutes until the chicken is cooked through.

Stuffed apples

Core 4 apples, leaving about $\frac{1}{2}$ inch of the bottom intact. Mix together $\frac{1}{4}$ cup rolled oats, $\frac{1}{4}$ cup raisins, $\frac{1}{4}$ cup chopped walnuts (optional), 1 tbsp. honey, and 2 tbsp. melted butter. Divide filling into each hollowed-out apple. Bake at 350° for 30 minutes until the apples are soft. 🍓



ACTIVITY CORNER

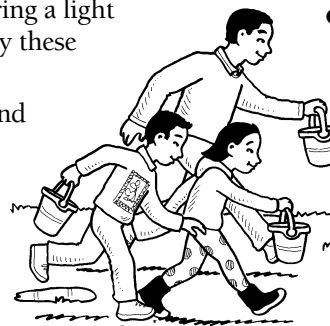
Active play on a rainy day

A little rain doesn't have to stop your child from playing outside. During a light rainfall or after a storm, try these activities:

- Waddle like ducks around the grass. Or hop like frogs from "lily pad" to "lily pad" (dry spot to dry spot).
- Enjoy the mud. Stomp in it, or make mud pies.

- Follow the rain running down a hill or a sloping sidewalk. Where does it go?

- Line up buckets, one for each person, during a downpour. When the rain stops, have a race. The first one to carry a bucket to the finish line wins—but there's a catch! If you spill any water, you have to go back to the start line. 🍓



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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