

Nutrition Nuggets

Food and Fitness for a Healthy Child

September 2007

BEST BITES



Leading questions

At meal or snack time, ask your child questions that will bring healthy responses. *Examples:* "Would you like water or milk to drink?" "Do you want an apple or an orange for dessert?" Giving only healthy choices leaves no room to ask for soda or candy.



Model TV alternatives

Do you spend your evenings curled up in front of the television? If so, you're passing on the TV habit to your youngster. While some television is okay (say, an hour a day), try to show there are healthier ways to spend time: playing tag or kickball, reading, shooting hoops.

DID YOU KNOW?

There's one vitamin that's best obtained outside. It's vitamin D, an important nutrient for growth and development. The best way to get vitamin D is from sunlight, so make sure your kids spend some time outdoors each week. Other sources include milk or cereal fortified with vitamin D, salmon, tuna fish, and eggs.



Just for fun

Andy: What do you call a three-week-old pizza?

Mom: I don't know. What?

Andy: A science experiment!



Healthy habits

Going to bed on time. Getting up for school. Doing homework and studying. Yes, a new school year means new routines!

Start this one off right by getting your child used to healthy eating and regular exercise, too. Here are several places to start.

Eat breakfast

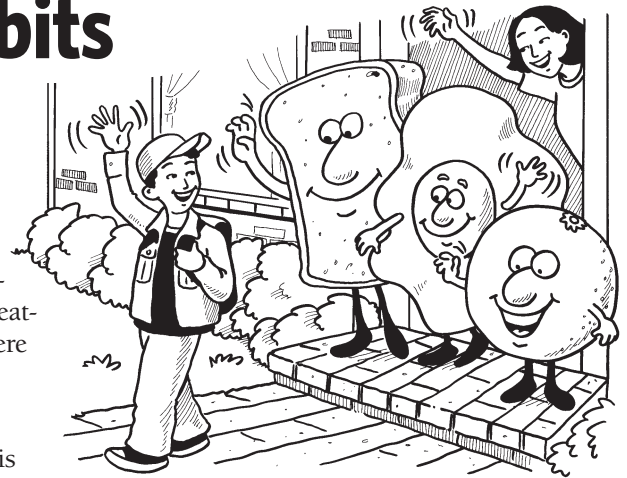
Have your youngster begin his day with a solid meal. Whether he eats at school or at home, encourage him to have whole grains (cereal, bread), protein (eggs, milk), and fruit. Eating in the morning gets your child's body working and his brain active.

Snack wisely

Children need frequent feedings to keep their energy up. Use snack time to work toward five to nine servings of fruits and vegetables and three servings of dairy a day (for example, mix blueberries into low-fat vanilla yogurt). While occasional sweets are okay, help your youngster avoid high-fat, high-sugar items.

Stay active

Shoot for an hour of daily physical activity. When your child is bored, suggest that he play hopscotch, start a game of hide-and-seek, or tumble. Begin a daily family exercise ritual where you take turns deciding what to do. Being active helps build strength and endurance.



Have family meals

Eating together as a family makes kids more likely to have healthy foods and gives you a chance to connect. Try to have dinner at the same time every night so mealtime becomes a habit. *Idea:* Let your youngster invite a friend once a week. He'll enjoy the company—and be proud to share his special family dinnertime. ♥

Faster food

You want to make healthy meals for your family, but who has the time? Try these tips to make things go faster.

■ **Prepare one-dish meals.** Sauté lean ground beef or turkey until brown, and add canned corn and pineapple tidbits. Roast a chicken, surrounded by small red potatoes and sliced carrots.

■ **Plan ahead.** When you have time to cook, such as on the weekend, make twice as much. Freeze one meal for later (label with date). While tonight's dinner is in the oven, begin tomorrow's. Cover chicken pieces with a marinade and refrigerate. They'll be ready to grill or bake when you get home. ♥

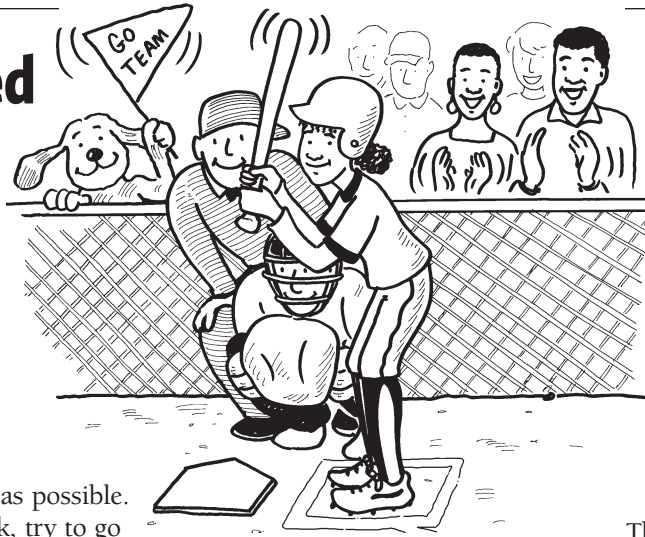


Sports: Get involved

Playing sports is a great way for your youngster to get regular physical activity and have fun. You can add to the excitement by being a part of the action. Here's how.

Be a coach. If you have the time and the interest, sign up to coach, help coach, or manage your child's team. You'll spend more time with your youngster and also get to know her friends.

Be a spectator. Attend as many games as possible. If baseball begins while you're still at work, try to go



for the last inning. You can provide a lesson in good sportsmanship by cheering for your child, her teammates, and an opponent who makes a good play.

Be a supporter.

Take your youngster to practices and games, or arrange for rides with friends. Stay for practice—even for a few minutes—if you can.

That way, you can talk about what happened and give your child a boost of confidence. *Example:* "Wow! You made a great save at soccer practice today!"



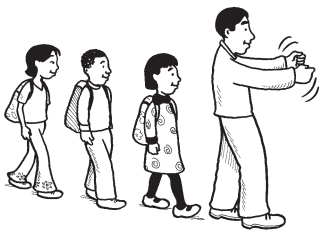
ACTIVITY CORNER

Walking school bus

Begin and end your child's day with exercise by starting a "walking school bus." The idea is simple: families take turns walking children to and from school. Try these steps:

1. Find participants. Ask neighbors you know, post signs at school, or see if your principal would coordinate a program.

2. Look for three to six youngsters (depending on the age) per "bus."



That's a safe number for one adult to supervise.

3. Map out a safe route. You'll want sidewalks,

easy-to-cross streets, and light traffic.

4. Have a meeting to work out a schedule, bad-weather plans, and the routine (meet at the "driver's" home, or have the "driver" stop at each house).

Having a walking school bus means built-in daily physical activity for your child. The bonus: She'll arrive at school energized and ready to learn!

Q & A Hold the salt

Q: I know that too much salt is not good for my kids. How can we cut down?

A: Children, like adults, need some salt, but there are simple ways to keep your family from having too much. For starters, watch what you buy. Get unsalted nuts and low-salt popcorn. Choose low-sodium soups and cheeses. Purchase vegetables either fresh, frozen without sauces, or canned without added salt. Also, try to stay away from packaged and frozen meals—they tend to be packed with sodium.



With little trouble, you can teach your kids to enjoy foods with other seasonings. Instead of cooking with salt, use spices (chili powder in soups, stews, and meat dishes), herbs (dill with carrots, peas, and seafood), or lemon juice (in fish and salad). Put pepper, but no salt, on the table when you eat.

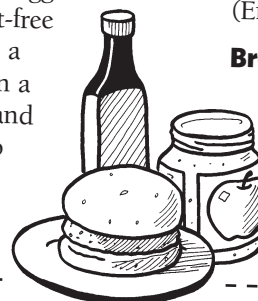
Finally, steer your youngsters toward healthy drinks, such as fat-free milk and water. Remember that sports drinks and soda contain sodium.

IN THE KITCHEN

Morning meals

What better way to start the day than with a nutritious—and delicious—breakfast. These easy treats can be made the night before and reheated in the microwave.

A.M. Burritos. Whisk eggs or egg substitute with fat-free milk, and scramble in a nonstick pan. Place on a whole-wheat tortilla, and top with canned pinto beans and low-fat shredded cheddar cheese. Roll up.



Tomato Toast. Mix ¼ cup condensed tomato soup, ¼ cup fat-free milk, and 1 egg. Dip whole-grain bread into the mixture to coat. Sauté in a nonstick pan until brown on both sides. Sprinkle with parmesan cheese. (Enough for 4 slices.)

Breakfast Burgers. Combine 1 lb. lean ground beef, ¼ cup no-sugar applesauce, and 1 tsp. steak sauce. Shape into small patties, and cook in a skillet 3–5 minutes per side. Serve on whole-wheat buns.

OUR PURPOSE

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

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