

Nutrition Nuggets

Food and Fitness for a Healthy Child

May 2011

Rio Rancho Public Schools

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BEST BITES

Thank cafeteria staff

At this time of year, students often give thank-you gifts to teachers. Suggest that your youngster think about the people who prepare his school breakfasts and lunches, too. He could write a note to the cafeteria staff, adding a picture of his favorite meal or a poem about a dish he likes.

DID YOU KNOW?

If your child is thirsty, she's already a little dehydrated. Encourage her to drink water all day long. You might get her a reusable water bottle in her favorite color or decorated with her favorite sport. She'll



enjoy drinking out of it at home or when she's out.

Playground safety

Heading to the park? Go over safety rules with your youngster first. For example, he should use both hands when climbing, slide feetfirst down a sliding board, and sit—not stand—on swings. Also, make sure he walks at a safe distance from children on swings. *Note:* Have him wear closed shoes and avoid hoods or drawstrings that can get caught on equipment.

Just for fun

Q: Why did the policeman go to the baseball game?

A: He wanted to catch the players stealing bases!



Avoid summer weight gain

With extra time on their hands and more opportunity for snacking, children often gain weight over the summer. Help your youngster steer clear of this problem with these suggestions.

Eat healthy

- Show excitement about the fresh foods of summer, and your child will catch your enthusiasm. Let him pick out fruits and vegetables at farmers' markets or produce stands, and showcase those items in meals and snacks. *Idea:* Cut peaches, plums, and nectarines in half (remove the pit), and grill for a delicious side dish or dessert.

- Stick to a schedule. Continue serving meals and snacks around the same time each day. Your youngster will stay in an eating routine, and he'll be less likely to want extra treats. Of course, it's fun to vary the setting in summer—try picnics by a pond, at the park, or in your backyard.

Play with your food

Give your child healthy ingredients, and let her play! The bonus? She gets to eat along the way. Here are a few ideas:

- Create a 3-D vegetable collage. She could use broccoli florets for trees, carrot and celery pieces for flowers, cauliflower for clouds, and a slice of yellow squash for a sun. *Tip:* Add a "river" of fat-free ranch dressing for dipping.

- Read a story, and build a character. Your youngster might read Dr. Seuss's *If I Ran the Circus* and then make fanciful figures from the book using cucumbers, radishes, blueberries, and raisins. Suggest that she hold the pieces together with peanut butter or toothpicks.

- Play games, using fruit as markers. For example, you can use strawberries and grapes for checkers—and eat the pieces you jump. Or play hangman, and make the figure with pieces of fruit instead of drawing it. ♡



Stay active

- Make plans that include physical activity. Consider enrolling your child in a structured program like a day camp or sports clinic so he'll get regular exercise. Or help him set up playtime with friends, and encourage them to be active (play outdoor games, run through the sprinkler). *Tip:* If your youngster attends a program that provides meals or snacks, check to see that they serve healthy foods.

- Have active family fun. Brainstorm ways to spend time together outside, and choose different ideas each week. You might go kayaking, walk around the zoo, or play tennis, for example. If you're planning a family vacation, build in physical activity like hiking, biking, or swimming. ♡



Run a relay race

Warmer weather and longer days mean more time for active fun outside. Help your child organize family members or neighbors into teams for relay races like these.

Push a ball. For each team, mark a start line and a line for turning around. Place a Ping-Pong ball at each start line. Crawling on hands and knees, use your nose to push the ball to the turn-back line and then back to the start line. Tag the next player, and she does the same thing. The team that finishes first wins.



Fill a carton. Put an empty egg carton and 12 pennies in a bowl at each turn-back line. Team members run to the egg carton, put a penny in an empty section, and run back to the start line so the next person can go. Which team can fill its carton (one penny per cup) the fastest?

Play tic-tac-toe. Use sidewalk chalk to draw a tic-tac-toe board, and give the first person on each team a piece of chalk. One team is Xs, and the other is Os. Race to the tic-tac-toe board, make a mark, race back, and hand your chalk to the next runner on your team. The winner is the first team to get tic-tac-toe.

Note: Teams should have the same number of runners, or one person can go twice. ♡

ACTIVITY CORNER

Family walks

This summer, consider starting a family walking routine. Walking is easy to do—and, with no special equipment needed, it's always available. Try these ideas:

- Take a “right-turn-only” walk. Start walking, and make only right turns until you get back home. The next time you walk, make it “left-turn-only.”
- Let your youngster map out a walking route in your neighborhood. As you walk, she can take notes. When you get home, have her draw the map—and then use it to lead you on another walk tomorrow.
- For a change of scenery, drive to other areas and walk there. Try to find places with points of interest for your child, such as streams, parks, or unusual buildings.



Tip: Get your youngster involved in your walks by making her the timekeeper. Say you want to walk for 30 minutes. After 15 minutes, she can announce that it's time to turn around. ♡

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.

ISSN 1935-4630

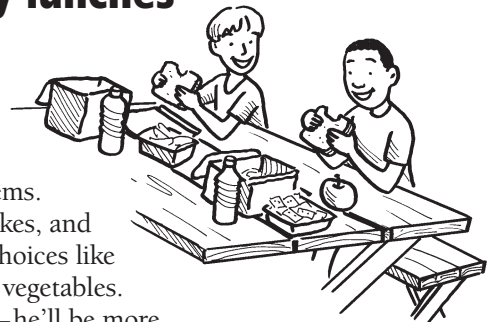
Q & A Packing healthy lunches

Q: During the school year my son buys lunch at school. But this summer he's going to camp, and I'll have to pack his lunch. What advice do you have?

A: Start by shopping together for lunch items. That way, he can help pick out foods he likes, and you'll get a chance to talk about healthy choices like whole-grain bread, lean meats, fruits, and vegetables.

Then, have your child pack his lunch—he'll be more likely to eat it. A fun idea is to put in items he can assemble himself at lunchtime. For example, you can include separate containers of baked crackers, slices of low-fat cheese, and shelled sunflower seeds. He'll be able to make his own nutty cracker sandwiches. Also, try to pack fruits that travel well, such as grapes or orange slices, since kids often won't eat mushy or bruised fruit.

Note: If your youngster's lunch will be refrigerated, you can include perishable foods. If not, put a frozen ice pack or a frozen carton of milk or 100% juice in his lunch box. Or avoid items like yogurt, meat, or mayonnaise that could spoil. ♡



IN THE KITCHEN

Smoothie secrets

Looking for a quick breakfast or snack? Mix up a smoothie. Filled with fiber, vitamins, and protein, smoothies are like a healthy milkshake! Here are a few tips:

- In a blender, mix any combination of fruit with low-fat yogurt, fat-free milk, or vanilla soy milk. *Tip:* To get an ice-cold smoothie, freeze the fruit for about an hour ahead of time, or blend in ice cubes.



- If the smoothie is too thick, add a little milk. If it's too thin, put in more fruit, yogurt, or ice cubes.
- Freeze berries when they're in season (and cost less) so you can use them in smoothies year-round.
- For a nutrition boost, add tofu, flaxseed, or wheat germ before blending.
- Serve with a fruit kebob. Thread strawberries, pineapple chunks, or pieces of melon onto a straw, and stick the straw into the smoothie. ♡