

Nutrition Nuggets

Food and Fitness for a Healthy Child

Jane Ann Conway-Little Red Hen School

BEST BITES

Drink water

Soda and fruit drinks can add unnecessary sugar and calories to an otherwise healthy meal. Try making water the regular drink in your house. Serve it with snacks and meals, and take it along when you go out. *Tip:* Tap water is inexpensive and often contains fluoride for healthy teeth.

Tumble time

Want to fit in more exercise at home? Have your child take a tumbling break. On a carpeted area of your family room or basement, challenge him to do a few forward and backward rolls. Join in the fun—seeing Mom or Dad do somersaults will encourage him to do more. *Note:* Tumbling is a weight-bearing exercise that helps children build bone density.

DID YOU KNOW?

Honey is the only food produced by insects that people eat. Not only that, it contains vitamins and can help lower cholesterol. Offer your youngster this natural sweetener instead of sugar sometimes. She might like a little honey drizzled onto toast, stirred into plain yogurt, or added to decaffeinated iced tea.



Just for fun

Q: Why are Martians good gardeners?

A: They have green thumbs!



Fantastic fruit

Fruit is the ultimate fun food—it comes in all different colors, shapes, sizes, and tastes. Use these ideas to get your child in the habit of eating a variety each day.

How much?

Kids need about $1\frac{1}{2}$ cups of fruit a day. Show your youngster what that looks like by lining up portions on the kitchen table. You can set out $\frac{1}{2}$ -cup servings, such as 4 strawberries, a small box of raisins, $\frac{1}{2}$ grapefruit, 16 grapes, or a medium-sized apple or orange. Have her arrange them into groups of three (3 servings of $\frac{1}{2}$ cup = $1\frac{1}{2}$ cups).

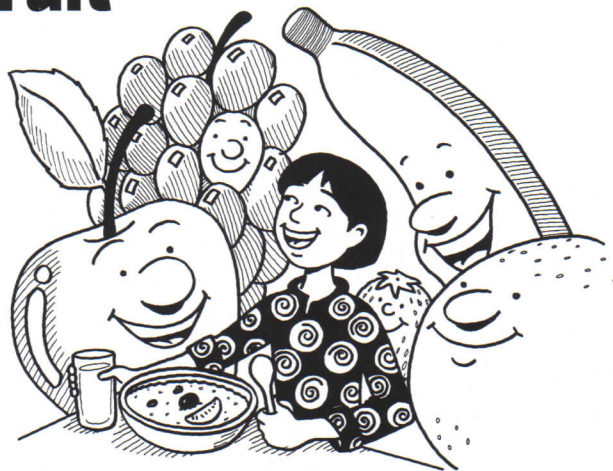
Add to meals

Serve fruit with every meal. Make a “fruit face” on grits or cream of wheat with a papaya mouth, grape nose, and blueberry eyes. For lunch, dice apples or pears into tuna or chicken salad. At dinner, top brown rice or broiled fish with tomato salsa, or put out bowls of fruit (grapefruit sections, peaches canned in their own juice).

Try new kinds

Introduce interesting fruits to your family. Delight your child with star fruit sliced crosswise into five-pointed shapes. Cut a pomegranate in half—the edible seeds will burst with flavor in her mouth. Sauté peeled, sliced plantains in a little olive oil and butter until they’re soft and sweet.

Snack idea: Make fruit shapes for extra fun. Cut and peel round slices (about $\frac{1}{2}$ ” thick) from a whole cantaloupe or honeydew melon. Let your child use a small cookie cutter to cut shapes (heart, circle) out of the centers.



Then, have her use the same cookie cutters to cut the same shapes out of kiwi or watermelon to fit into the holes.

Everyday activity boosts

Your youngster needs 60 minutes of physical activity a day to stay healthy and fit—and every little bit helps. Here are a few simple ways to increase his daily activity:

- Bike together to his friend’s house, instead of driving him.
- Take the stairs rather than the elevator or escalator when going to the dentist or shopping at the mall.
- If you need a book from upstairs or a box from the basement, ask your youngster to get it for you.
- At the grocery store or library, park farther from the entrance.
- Do errands on foot where possible (walk together to the bank or post office).



Create food traditions

Let's have Grandma's beef stew for dinner—and Aunt Pearl's homemade applesauce for dessert!

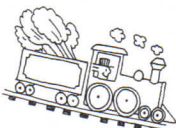
There's something magical about family recipes. They stir up warm memories of meals with favorite relatives and make families feel connected. Build food traditions in your family with these suggestions:

■ Prepare a favorite dish from your childhood (your great-aunt's mashed potatoes, your grandmother's black-eyed peas). While you eat, tell a story about the person who created the recipe. You'll give your youngster a sense of family history while passing on your heritage.



■ Together, brainstorm a list of your family's favorite dishes. Your son might love your corn pudding, or your daughter may think Uncle Mark grills the best hamburgers. Write the recipes in a spiral notebook, and let your child decorate a cover and make up a title ("Our Family's Favorite Foods").

■ You can start a new tradition, too. If your family loves tacos, declare a monthly taco night. You'll create memories for a lifetime—one day your child will tell his children about the tacos he had growing up. And future generations just might put your taco recipe in their family cookbook. 🍌



ACTIVITY CORNER

Jump to it

Jumping rope is great exercise for a lifetime.

Try these four ideas to get your children jumping their way into good health:

1. Take turns calling out moves to each other. *Examples:* "Double jump" (jump twice for each time the rope goes around), "Cross" (cross the rope in front of you while jumping up), or "Backward" (start with the rope in front of your feet).

2. Say the alphabet while jumping, and name a vegetable for as many letters as possible. *Example:* A is for artichoke, B is for broccoli, C is for corn on the cob, and so on.

3. Put on music, and start jumping rope. When you stop the music, the jumpers have to freeze. Start the music, and jump again.

4. On the count of three, everyone jump as many times as you can. Can your children outjump you? 🏆



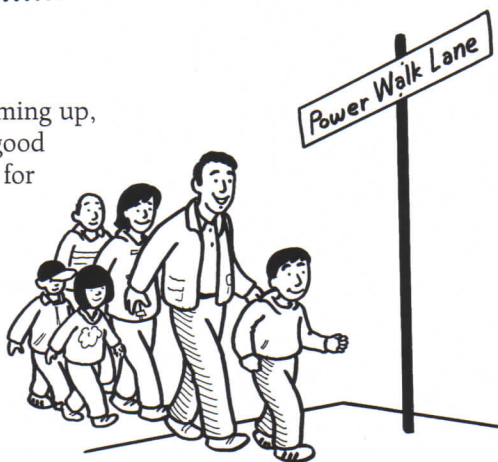
PARENT TO PARENT

Walkie-talkie

With the weather warming up, I thought it would be a good time for my son and me to get outside for more exercise. I suggested that he and I start going for walks together, and he immediately asked if he could bring a friend along. That gave me an idea.

I suggested that we start a neighborhood walking club with other moms and kids. We made a list of friends to call, and almost all of them were interested.

Now we meet at the corner Mondays, Wednesdays, and Fridays at 5 p.m. We take a "power walk"—walking fast and swinging our arms back and forth for extra exercise—for about 45 minutes. We're all getting more exercise, and we have fun talking as we walk. I think this is something we'll keep up for a long time! 🚶



IN THE KITCHEN

Way to go

Turn healthy snacks into boats, trains, and rockets, and even picky eaters won't be able to resist. Here's how.

Sail away. Slice hard-boiled eggs in half lengthwise. Mash the yolk with a little light mayonnaise, and put it back into the egg white. Make a sail by sliding a toothpick through a slice of cheese.

Choo-choo. Tape together small paper cups to make a "snack train." Fill each cup with a different snack—perhaps cereal for the engine, celery pieces for the boxcar, mini-pretzels for the coal car, and dried cherries for the caboose.



Blast off. Use a pineapple ring (canned or fresh) as a launching pad, and stand half of a peeled banana in the center as the rocket. Top with half of a maraschino cherry to make the rocket's nose. 🚀

OUR PURPOSE

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

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