

Nutrition Nuggets

Food and Fitness for a Healthy Child

December 2009

Henrico County School Nutrition Services
Timothy E. P. Mertz, Director



BEST BITES

In plain view

Keep a tray of washed, ready-to-eat raw vegetables in the refrigerator at your child's eye level. You might fill it with colorful bell pepper slices, whole mushrooms, and broccoli pieces. Then, when your youngster opens the refrigerator for a quick snack, the

healthy vegetables will be the first thing he sees.



Support sports teams

Is your youngster on a sports team? Show support for her physical activity by helping at practice, ordering team T-shirts, or arranging healthy snacks for games and events. Since games are often on weekends or evenings, working parents may be able to drive carpools, keep score, or assist the coach.

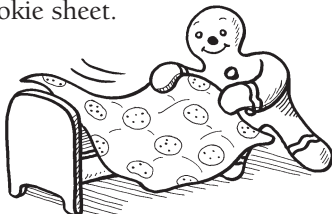
DID YOU KNOW?

People who eat quickly are three times more likely to be overweight. Encourage your family to slow down while eating. Chew food slowly, pause between bites, and put your fork down from time to time. You'll enjoy your food more—and you may do better at maintaining a healthy weight.

Just for fun

Q: What did the gingerbread man put on his bed?

A: A cookie sheet.



Healthy drinks

When your youngster is thirsty, what does she reach for? Soda or juice? Sports or energy drinks? Help her make the switch to water and milk, and you'll encourage her to set healthy patterns for life. Here's how:

1. Try for 3–4 servings of fat-free milk a day. Your child can drink a glass with breakfast, buy it with her school lunch, or have it with her after-school snack. Or use milk to make meals and snacks.

Examples: Mix with scrambled eggs, or blend a smoothie with milk, yogurt, ice cubes, and fruit.

2. Make water your family's "drink of choice" when you're out. Take reusable bottles on car trips, and give your youngster water when she goes to sports practices and games. When you eat out, ask for water rather than soda. Your family will be healthier, and you'll save money, too.

3. Let your child see you drinking both milk and water. You might have milk



with a meal or keep a glass of water nearby when you work, pay bills, or read. *Tip:* Try not to drink soda around your youngster—research shows that children of soda drinkers are much more likely to drink soda regularly.

4. Limit sports, energy, and juice drinks. They can have as much sugar as soda, and most sports and energy drinks contain caffeine. If your child drinks juice, try to restrict it to a glass a day, and make sure to buy only 100% juice. ●

Add flavor!

Help your child break the soda habit with these ideas for dressing up water.

Fruit punch. Put a splash of 100% fruit juice into a glass of seltzer (carbonated water), and drop in an orange slice or a strawberry. Your youngster will love the bubbles—and the fruit flavor.

Water coolers. Add thinly sliced lemons and limes, cucumbers, or apples to a pitcher of water, and keep it in the refrigerator. Changing the flavor daily will keep your child interested. *Tip:* Refrigerate for 30 minutes to let the flavors set.

Fruit purée. Blend fresh or frozen fruit in a blender until it's smooth, and stir a few tablespoons of the purée into seltzer. Try mangos, peaches, or berries—or mix and match flavors. ●



Active all winter

Just because it's cold outside doesn't mean it's time to plop down on the couch! Here are activities to help your youngster stay fit this winter.

Play inside

- Get several exercise videos from the library, and do one of them every day. Which is the favorite?
- Play follow the leader through the house. *Example:* Crawl under a table, step over a magazine rack, hop around a sofa.
- Learn to do tricks with a hacky sack. Practice every day, and then show friends or family what you can do.



- Choose a movement to go with each number on a die (1 = 1 sit-up, 2 = 2 squats, and so on). Take turns rolling the die and calling out the number. Then, everyone does the activity.

Go outdoors

- Race-walk around the block. Who can cross the finish line first?
- Gather friends for a flag football game. Ask parents to join on a weekend for a parent-child contest.
- Play hide-and-seek or Red Rover in the snow. (No snow? Play anyway!)
- Using lacrosse sticks, toss a small rubber ball back and forth. *Note:* Find youth lacrosse sticks at a garage sale, or ask neighbors for hand-me-downs. ♣

ACTIVITY CORNER

Find the iron

Your child needs to eat foods with iron to stay healthy. Why? Iron makes hemoglobin, which carries oxygen through the bloodstream into the cells of her body.

Luckily, your youngster's cereal can be a good source of iron. Here's a fun experiment that will let her see the iron with her own eyes.



Have your child put ¼ cup of fortified cereal in a zipper freezer bag, seal it, and crush the cereal with

her hands or a rolling pin. Let her pour the cereal into a bowl, add ¼ cup water, and stir the mixture well with a strong magnet (bar or horseshoe-shaped).

Then, she can lift the magnet out of the bowl and wipe it clean with a white paper towel. She will see tiny black specks on the paper towel—that's the iron! ♣

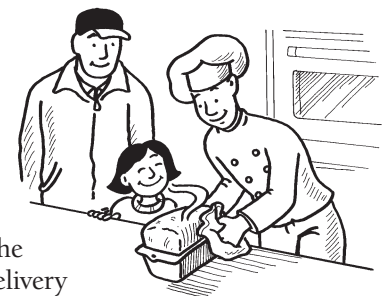
PARENT TO PARENT

Food field trips

When my daughter Mia came home excited from a class trip, I had a great idea. Why not go on family field trips? Since I've been trying to get my children to eat better, I thought we might try places where they could learn about food.

Our first trip was to a bakery. My kids loved finding out how bread is made. Next, we visited the local supermarket. The manager showed us the delivery docks, the storeroom, and other behind-the-scenes areas.

We have a few more "food trips" planned. In the spring, we're going to pick strawberries one month and visit a dairy farm that's about an hour away another month. We're enjoying the family time together, and I'm glad my children are learning where their food comes from. ♣



IN THE KITCHEN

Rice bowls

For a quick and healthy meal, borrow this idea from Asian cuisine. Cook brown rice, divide it into bowls for each person, and add toppings.

Breakfast: Scrambled eggs, chopped tomatoes, diced green bell peppers, and shredded Monterey Jack cheese

Pizza: Cooked turkey sausage, sliced mushrooms, chopped onions, low-salt tomato sauce, and a sprinkle of oregano

Chicken: Cubed, cooked chicken (use last night's leftovers),

microwaved frozen vegetables like corn, peas, and carrots, and low-sodium teriyaki sauce

Taco: Ground beef (browned and drained), canned kidney beans (drained), shredded cheddar cheese, low-fat sour cream, and salsa

Note: One-half cup of brown rice provides one serving of whole grains

(three servings a day are recommended).

Also, rice is gluten-free, so it's a great choice for children with celiac disease or wheat allergies. ♣



OUR PURPOSE

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

Resources for Educators,
a division of Aspen Publishers, Inc.
128 N. Royal Avenue • Front Royal, VA 22630
540-636-4280 • rfeustomer@wolterskluwer.com
www.rfeonline.com

Nutrition Nuggets is reviewed by a registered dietitian. Consult a physician before beginning any major change in diet or exercise.
ISSN 1935-4630