

Nutrition Nuggets

Food and Fitness for a Healthy Child

February 2008

Richardson Independent School District
Child Nutrition Department



BEST BITES

Try and try again

It can take 14 to 16 tries for a child to like a new food.

So when you're introducing healthy foods, don't give up too soon. Offer the new item every couple of days over several weeks. You might be surprised to see your youngster enjoying broccoli or salmon after all.

Lettuce wraps

Try this fun idea for an easy and healthy snack or light meal. Finely dice leftover chicken or meat along with celery, carrots, and water chestnuts (canned). Let your child scoop the mixture onto an iceberg lettuce leaf and drizzle on a little Asian dipping sauce. Then, she can roll it up and eat with her hands!



DID YOU KNOW?

Physical activity is not only good for your child's body—it's also good for his state of mind. Research shows that active kids have higher self-esteem, lower anxiety, and less stress. Plus, they



behave better in class, concentrate more, and

retain more information. These are all reasons to encourage your youngster to get an hour of exercise a day.

Just for fun

Teacher: If I cut an apple into four pieces and a banana into eight, what will I get?

Brittany: Fruit salad!



Snack and learn

Today is your child's lucky day. She gets to play with her food! With these healthy snacks, she'll practice math and language skills as she eats.



Solve equations.

Use stick-shaped food (carrot sticks, strips of string cheese, slices of bell pepper) to "write" math problems for your youngster. *Examples:* $4 + 1 = \underline{\quad}$, $2 - 1 = \underline{\quad}$. When she fills in the answer, she can eat the equation. Can she make one for you?

Write words. Try this tasty way for your child to practice her spelling words. Spread peanut butter onto baked crackers. Then, put jelly (sugar-free) in a squeeze bottle and let her write the words, one letter per cracker. Once she spells a word right, she can enjoy a PB&J snack.

Think logically. Have your youngster create and solve a brainteaser. Give her 18 celery sticks to arrange into nine triangles within one large triangle. Can she take away 3 celery sticks to leave six triangles? When she's finished, she can top the celery with fat-free cream cheese.

Build shapes. Set out bowls of mini marshmallows and thin whole-wheat pretzel sticks. Challenge your child to make as many shapes as she can. *Hint:* Three marshmallows and three pretzels will make a triangle; eight of each will make a cube. She'll

work on basic geometry skills—before eating the results.

Create patterns. Use fruit to make a pattern for your youngster to decipher. *Example:* grape, grape, strawberry, blueberry. Lay out the pattern two times, and ask your child to repeat it once more. Then, she can dunk her "pattern" into a healthy dip of nonfat lemon yogurt mixed with diced crystallized ginger. ♥

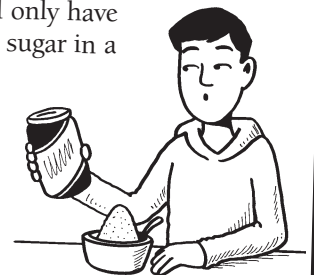
Watch the sugar

Getting your child to cut down on sugar can be hard. Try showing him just what he's eating or drinking.

For example, ask him to measure out 11 teaspoons of sugar into a bowl—the amount in one can of many kinds of soda. Then, tell him that he should only have 12 teaspoons of added sugar in a whole day!

Explain that fruit and dairy products, such as plain milk, have natural sugar, while candy, soda, cakes, pies, and snack foods have added sugar.

Steer away from foods with sugar or other sweeteners (corn syrup, dextrose, fructose) at the top of the ingredient list. ♥



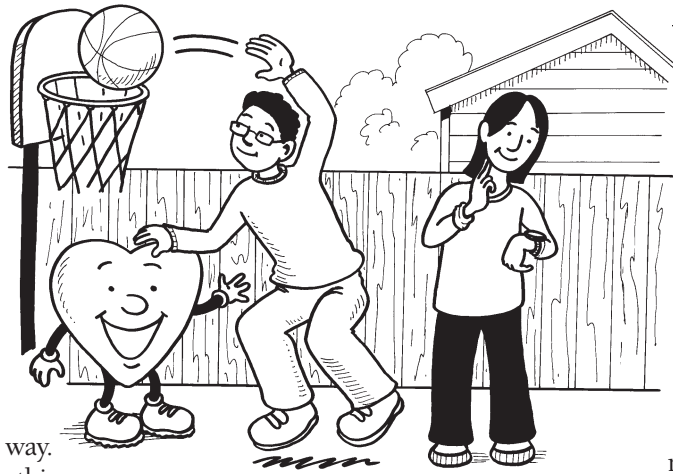
Get your heart pumping!

Running, jumping rope, playing basketball—any kind of activity will raise your child’s heart rate.

You can tell your youngster that when he feels his heart pumping during exercise, that’s a good thing. Increasing his heart rate to a “target level” shows he is exercising the right way.

In honor of American Heart Month this month, show your child how to measure his heart rate:

1. Place your index and middle fingers on the side of your lower neck.



2. When you feel the pulse, count the beats for 10 seconds (watch a clock with a second hand).

3. Multiply the number by 6 (12 beats in 10 seconds x 6 = 72 pulse rate).
Tip: You can do the math for younger children.

Let your youngster experiment to see the effects of different activities. He should take his

pulse before beginning and then after each exercise (bouncing a ball, running a block). How high does his heart rate go after each one?

Note: Target heart rates for children vary from 115 to 133, depending on age, weight, and health. Ask your school nurse for guidance. ♥



ACTIVITY CORNER Be active together

Jimmy skates with his dad on weekends. Lauren goes swimming with her mom on Tuesday afternoons. And Samantha takes a mom-and-me aerobics class twice a week.

What do these parents and children all have in common? They’re fitness partners! Get your child to be more active by setting aside some together time devoted to physical activity.



Start by coming up with

something you both like. You can each make a list of favorite activities and compare them to find one in common. Then, consult your calendar to pick a good time.

Spending part of your busy week exercising together will show your child how important fitness is to you. ♥

IN THE KITCHEN

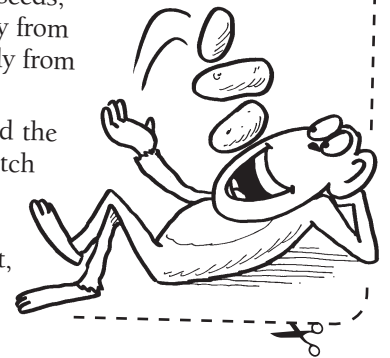
Tropical fruits

Dreaming of summer fruits? Tropical fruits are available in many grocery stores all year long. Here are easy ways to prepare three kid-pleasers.

■ **Kiwi.** Slice in half horizontally, and eat with a spoon. *Note:* Some people like to bite into kiwis whole—brown fuzz and all!

■ **Papaya.** Cut in half lengthwise. Scoop out the seeds, and slice the halves into spears. Pare the fruit away from the peel and cut into bite-size pieces, or eat directly from the peel.

■ **Mango.** Cut down both sides lengthwise around the pit, and separate. Then, cut each half in a cross-hatch pattern (four slices across, four slices down)—being careful not to cut through the mango skin. Hold each end of the mango half, turn it inside out, and cut or bite the cubes off. ♥



PARENT TO PARENT

Meal-in-a-bag

My kids have always wanted fast food. But I was beginning to think they liked the package and the toy better than the meal. So I came up with a great way to get them to eat healthy food at home—a homemade Family Fun Meal.

I started by having them decorate brown paper lunch bags with markers. Then we came up with a menu of items to put inside: tuna sandwiches, yogurt and granola,

or cheese and crackers; grape tomatoes or baby carrots; orange slices, fruit cup, or a banana; and a sports bottle filled with water or fat-free milk.

The finishing touch was the toy. At the dollar store, I got stickers, action figures, and jewelry. I drop a surprise into every Family Fun Meal, and my children are thrilled. Now the only “driving through” we’re doing is in our own kitchen! ♥



OUR PURPOSE

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

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