

Nutrition Nuggets

Food and Fitness for a Healthy Child

January 2012

Vallecitos School District
Cafeteria Department

BEST BITES

Fast-food alternatives

Brainstorm a list of quick meals you could make rather than stopping for fast food. For example, make scrambled eggs or tuna fish salad (with light mayonnaise). Or stir-fry frozen shrimp and a bag of frozen vegetables in a hot skillet. By focusing on items you keep on hand, you can serve a healthier meal that is still fast.

Vigorous activity

Getting some “vigorous” physical activity every day is good for your youngster’s heart and overall health. Help her understand what vigorous activity is. After she is active (runs around outside, walks home from school, plays hockey), have her do a quick check of her body. Is she sweating? Is her heart beating fast? If the answer is yes, then she has done vigorous activity.

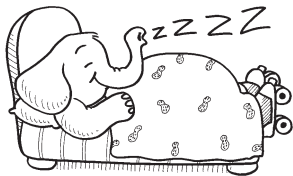
DID YOU KNOW?

Children (and adults) need to wear sunscreen in the winter, too. Even though the air is chillier, sunlight can still be strong enough to damage skin. Get your child in the habit of putting sunscreen on his face, neck, and any other exposed areas before heading out to play this winter.

Just for fun

Q: Why did the elephant put on skates before he went to bed?

A: Because he wanted to get rolling in the morning!



Fabulous fruit

Looking for a nutritious food that is ready to eat, is easily available, and comes in lots of varieties? Try fruit! Consider these ways to encourage your child to have at least 2–3 servings every day.

A color a day. Pick a color for each day of the week, and challenge family members to eat a fruit that matches (plums, grapes, or blackberries on purple day, for instance). At night, report to each other on the fruit you ate. *Idea:* Ramp up the fun by asking everyone to wear clothes that match the color, too.

Ad campaign. Suggest that your youngster design a magazine or billboard ad to persuade children to eat more fruit. She could write a catchy slogan on a poster board, add advertising copy, and illustrate it. Or she could create a script for a radio ad and record herself reading it in



an “announcer’s voice.” Coming up with reasons to eat fruit will get her thinking about why she should have more fruit.

Wheel of food. Have your child think about different ways to enjoy fruit by making a “wheel” for each of her favorites. She could draw the fruit (an apple) in the center of a sheet of paper and make 4–6 lines from it (like spokes on a wheel). At the end of each line, have her illustrate a way to eat the fruit (sliced apples with caramel dip, applesauce, apple-cinnamon muffin). 🍎

Fruity ideas

These yummy “recipes” will have your youngster asking for more fruit in no time:

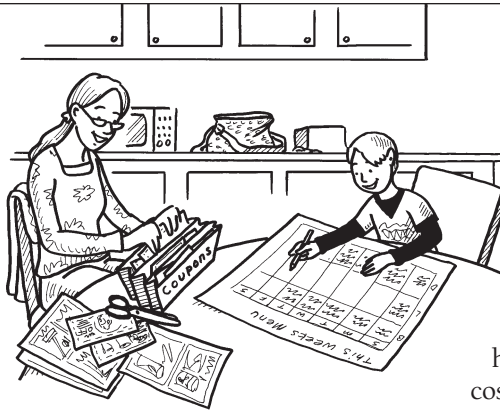
- Make banana ice cream—out of nothing but bananas! Cut bananas into little pieces, place on a plate, and freeze for about two hours. Mix in a blender until the pieces turn into ice cream.
- Create a fruity smiley face in your child’s oatmeal. You could use a tangerine wedge for the mouth, a raisin for the nose, and kiwi slices for eyes.
- Freeze clusters of grapes or cut-up pieces of mangoes or peaches to eat right out of the freezer. Or thread fruit (melon chunks, strawberries) onto skewers for frozen kebabs.
- Using a blender or an electric mixer, combine low-fat cream cheese and sliced strawberries until smooth. Serve as a dip for other fruits. 🍓



Money-saving tips

Serving healthier food to your family and saving money can go hand in hand. Here's how:

- Plan ahead. Sketch out your week's menus, and make a shopping list. You'll cut down on impulse buying. *Tip:* Avoid shopping when you or your children are hungry.
- Buy produce that's in season. For example, you'll spend less for cauliflower in the winter or zucchini in the summer. Also, buying items produced locally can save on shipping costs.



- Consider less expensive sources of protein. Eggs, beans, and tofu may cost less than meat, chicken, or fish. *Idea:* Make a vegetarian meal once or twice a week for regular savings.
- Get large containers of plain nonfat yogurt. To serve, stir in fresh berries, cut-up fruit, or a little honey. You'll save on sugar as well as cost, compared to buying yogurt with fruit, flavoring, granola, or candy added.
- Buy in bulk. For instance, get family packs of pork chops and freeze in meal-size portions, or get grains (brown rice, barley) in bulk and store in airtight containers.
- Avoid packaged cookies, bakery items, snack foods, processed foods, and frozen treats. They're not only high in fat and low in nutrients, they're also pricey. ●

Q & A

Count calories?



Q: My son and daughter are both overweight. Should we teach them to count their calories?

A: While it's a good idea for children to understand how calories work, it's best if they don't focus on counting them. Instead, try to help them eat a healthy, balanced diet and get enough exercise.

Teach them to eat vegetables, lean protein, fruit, and whole grains, and to stay away from "empty calories" (junk food and soda with no nutritional benefit). Also, encourage them to take small servings, and have them stop and consider whether they're full before taking more.



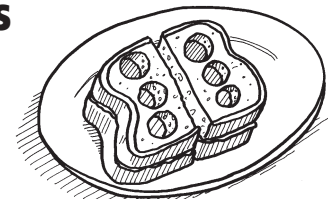
You can explain that calories measure how much energy we get from eating a certain food. Our bodies need calories for energy, but if we take in more than we use, we can gain too much weight. To burn calories, make sure your youngsters have lots of opportunities to be active rather than sitting in front of a TV, computer, or video game. ●

IN THE KITCHEN

Sandwich creations

Begin the new year with interesting new ideas for sandwiches. Here are four to start with:

1. Update your child's PB&J by pairing almond butter with dried cranberries and sliced almonds. Or try cashew butter with apricot preserves.
2. Make a fruit-and-veggie sandwich with crunchy sliced apples, cut-up cooked asparagus, shredded carrots, and pepper jack cheese. *Idea:* Make it open faced (one piece of bread only), and broil until the cheese melts.
3. Spread reduced-fat veggie cream cheese on a slice of bread. Top with



cucumber slices. Roll up tightly, and cut into pieces "sushi style."

4. Create a "stoplight sandwich." Spread hummus on one piece of bread. Then, lay tomato slices across the top third, yellow bell peppers in the middle, and spinach leaves on the bottom. Finally, poke three holes down each side of another slice of bread and lay it on top. You'll have two traffic lights! ●

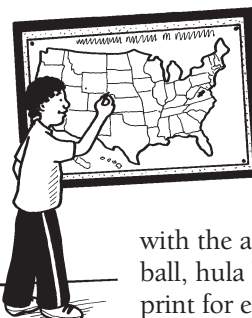
ACTIVITY CORNER

An hour a day...

Trying to fit more physical activity into your child's life? Help him get the recommended 60 minutes a day by making a game of keeping track.

- Each day, have him draw a picture of a place where he might play (a playground, a football field). For every 10 minutes of physical activity he does that day, he can add a sticker. Challenge him to have six stickers by bedtime.
- Post a map (world, U.S., or state) on a wall in your kitchen or hallway. Then,

let your child pick a destination and put a pushpin in his start and finish points. Each time he exercises for 20 minutes, he can move the pin an inch closer to his destination. When he "arrives," he can pick a new place to travel to.



- Have your youngster draw footprints in a path from one end of a poster board to another. Each footprint could represent an hour of play. Let him color in, date, and label the footprint

with the activities he did that day (kick-ball, hula hoop). Can he color in a footprint for each day? ●

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.

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