

Nutrition Nuggets

Food and Fitness for a Healthy Child

March 2012

Vallecitos School District
Cafeteria Department



BEST BITES

Family screen time

To get your youngster watching less TV, try cutting down on screen time for the whole family. Consider choosing a show or two to watch each day, and then leave the set off the rest of the time. *Idea:* When your show is over, use that as a signal to play outside or do something active inside.

DID YOU KNOW?

Your child's stomach is roughly the size of two of his fists. That image can give him (and you) an idea of how much food it takes to fill him up. Help him control portion sizes by serving smaller meals and healthy snacks that will satisfy his hunger but curb overeating.

Play "scoop ball"

For a fun game of catch, cut off the tops of a few empty plastic milk jugs (one for each player), and tape over the edges so they're not

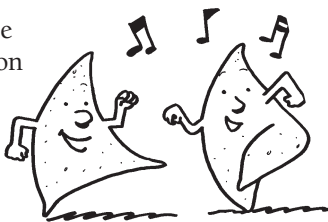


sharp. Then, use your "scoopers" to throw a small ball back and forth. How many times can you toss the ball without it landing on the ground?

Just for fun

Q: Why did the tortilla chips start dancing?

A: Because they put on the salsa!



Salad tips

Make salad that is fun to eat, and your youngster is likely to turn into a salad eater. The benefit? She'll eat more vegetables and get the fiber, vitamins, and minerals that she needs. Try these ideas.

Make a "chopped" salad.

Put all your salad ingredients (lettuce, tomatoes, bell peppers, and broccoli, for instance) on a cutting board. Use a knife to chop everything into small pieces. Then, toss the salad in a bowl with a little low-fat dressing.

Wrap it up. Set out large lettuce leaves, and suggest that your child spoon salad on top of one. She can roll the lettuce up and use her hands to eat her "salad wrap."

Shake and eat. Somehow, shaking a salad makes it more fun to eat. Have your child put salad ingredients into a clean, small jar with a tight-fitting lid. Then, she can shake it and eat right out of the jar.



Keep it crisp. Crunchy lettuce and vegetables are more appealing than soggy ones. After rinsing the lettuce under running water, dry it in a salad spinner (or wrap it tightly in a towel to wring dry). *Idea:* Let your youngster rinse and spin the lettuce—this is a fun job for a child!

Serve ingredients separately. Instead of tossing ingredients together, create a "composed salad." On a pretty platter, line up separate rows of spinach leaves, avocado chunks, cucumber slices, and grape tomatoes, for example. Then, your youngster can serve herself. ♥

Support your child's sports

When your child participates in sports or other physical activities, let him know that you support him all the way. Use these suggestions.

Offer to help

If you enjoy sports yourself, consider signing up to be a coach or an assistant coach. Or you could volunteer in other ways: be a team parent, organize the snack schedule, help with a fund-raising drive, or give rides to children who need them.

Be enthusiastic

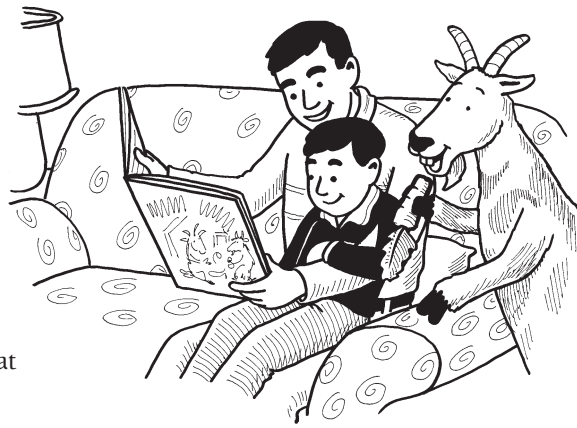
Stay for practices to see what your child is learning, and try to attend all games, meets, or matches. Encourage your youngster by praising him for the skills he's developing, and try not to focus on wins, losses, or mistakes. Finally, cheer for the whole team, not just your child. ♥



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Let's read about food

Facing a food challenge with your youngster? Reading a storybook can be a wonderful way to open up a discussion and encourage your child to eat nutritious foods—just like the characters in the book. Here are stories that can help.



Picky eaters

If your child balks at trying new foods, try approaching the problem in a playful way with the classic Dr. Seuss tale *Green Eggs and Ham*. When Sam I Am finally tries the green eggs and ham, he finds out he likes them. Or try *The Monster Who Ate My Peas* (Danny Schnitzlein), where a boy who hates peas makes a deal with a monster.

Too much junk food

Let your child learn about the benefits of eating a balanced diet along with Gregory the goat. In *Gregory the Terrible Eater* (Mitchell Sharmat), the little goat refuses to eat proper goat foods like shoes and garbage—he prefers the fruits and vegetables that his parents consider junk food. Or read about a girl who will eat only cookies in *Cookie* by Lisa Woomer. ●

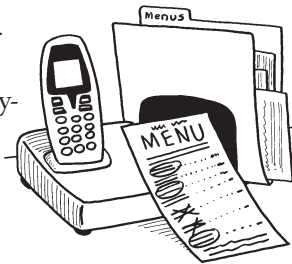
Q & A Takeout menus

Q: I have three kids and work full-time, so we wind up grabbing carryout food more often than I would like. What are the healthiest choices?

A: You're not alone. Americans get almost half their meals from restaurants or carryout places. The good news is that you can make healthier choices.

Collect carryout menus, and find a time to go through them, circling the most nutritious items. Look for key words like *grilled*, *baked*, or *broiled*—and highlight those foods. Cross out less healthy ones, such as those tagged *fried*, *smothered in*, *au gratin*, or *creamy*. Then, file the menus in a folder or binder, and keep them handy for ordering.

You can also use this opportunity to teach your children about healthy choices. Showing them the words to look for and avoid will help them know how to order when they're out with friends or on their own—which will be sooner than you think! ●

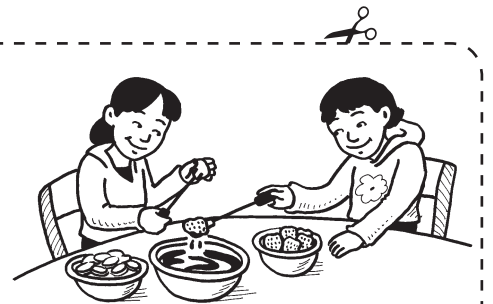


IN THE KITCHEN

Sweet treats

Looking for a sweet ending to a meal that won't break the calorie bank? Try these creative ways to lighten up dessert time:

- Let family members dip strawberries, melon chunks, and banana pieces in fat-free chocolate pudding for a "chocolate fondue."
- Make "creamsicle" freezer pops by mixing 1½ cups orange juice, 1½ cups nonfat vanilla yogurt, and 1 tsp. sugar. Freeze in cups or freezer-pop molds, about 6 hours.
- Have a berry sundae. Cover a small scoop of nonfat frozen yogurt with



fresh or thawed frozen berries, and shave dark chocolate on top.

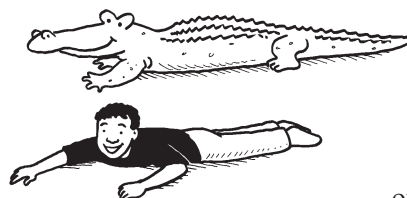
- Serve roasted honey pineapple. Heat ½ cup orange juice with ¼ cup honey in a small saucepan. Pour it over pineapple slices, and let stand for 30 minutes. Place slices on a baking sheet, and roast at 450° for 10 minutes. ●

ACTIVITY CORNER

Animal races

On your mark, get set, go! Challenge your family to races where they waddle like a duck, walk like a crab, or crawl like a crocodile—all in the name of fun exercise. Here's how.

Duck. Step your feet apart, bend your knees, and squat down. Hold onto your ankles with your hands. Then, mark off a circle in your room or outside, and race around the "lake."



Crab. Lie on your back, bend your knees with your feet flat on the ground, and put your palms down flat by your shoulders. Lift your body off the ground, and race (on hands and feet) along the "beach."

Crocodile. Lie on your stomach with your arms stretched out in front of you, and keep your feet together. To move, scoot forward with your hands and drag your feet behind you. Race across the "swamp" from one end of the room to the other. ●

OUR PURPOSE

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

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