

Nutrition Nuggets

Food and Fitness for a Healthy Child

December 2011

BEST BITES



The gift of cooking

Cooking is a wonderful hobby—and life skill—that parents and children can learn together. At holiday or birthday time, consider giving your youngster cooking lessons that you can take with him. You might find classes at a community center, the library, or a local cooking school.



DID YOU KNOW?

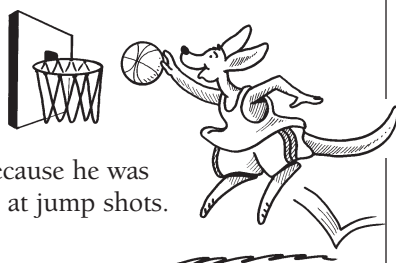
Foods that are rich in nutrients will keep your youngster feeling full longer. Plus, getting vitamins and minerals through food (rather than supplements) helps her body absorb them better. Nutrient-rich foods include fruits, vegetables, whole grains, lean meats, fish, beans, nuts, and low-fat or fat-free dairy products.

Dress for PE

Encourage your child to dress for activity on PE days. He should wear loose-fitting clothes that are comfortable to move in and sneakers that have good support. Also, be sure he takes a jacket, a hat, and gloves or mittens so he can enjoy outdoor PE or recess.

Just for fun

Q: Why did the coach want the kangaroo on the basketball team?



A: Because he was good at jump shots.

Epping School District
Veronica Bush, Food Services Supervisor

Grocery store fun

Have a bingo game... play I Spy... make a map. Where are you? At the supermarket!

Games and activities can make food shopping fun—and help teach your youngster about healthy eating. Here's how.

Play bingo

Before leaving home, help your child use your grocery list to create a bingo game. Together, make a bingo card with the food groups (fruits and vegetables, dairy, grains, meats and beans) across the top. Have him write food items from your list underneath their headings (*example:* milk in the dairy column). Then, as you put each item in the cart, he can mark off the box on his bingo card.

Spy healthy foods

Let your youngster take along a pair of binoculars and play I Spy. For instance, when you're picking out produce, you might say, "I spy a vegetable that is purple and shaped like a big pear." He can use his binoculars to search for the answer (an eggplant). As you play, he'll build observation skills and learn more



about foods. *Tip:* Pick a healthy item you'd like him to try—once he "spies" it, he might be more interested in sampling it at home.

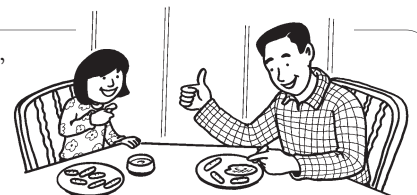
Draw a map

Have your child pack a pencil, markers, and paper (a sketch pad or blank paper on a clipboard). While you shop, he can make a map of the grocery store. He might draw rectangles for each aisle and label them with the foods found there. Suggest that he add symbols so he can see the sections at a glance (a banana for fruit, a loaf of bread for grains). He'll learn how the grocery store is organized and where the healthiest foods are. ♥

Positive feedback

When your child chooses nutritious foods, let her know that you notice. Your praise can encourage her to keep making similar decisions. Here are some things you could say:

- "Good idea to have carrots for a snack!"
- "I'm happy to see you trying pomegranate seeds. They're so good for you!"
- "Wow—I see lots of yummy vegetables on your plate!"
- "I'm glad you and Tami decided to turn off the TV and go shoot baskets."
- "I like the way you're cutting the fat off the meat. That's what I do, too."
- "I appreciate your clearing the table. With you helping, we'll finish sooner and be able to play outside." ♥

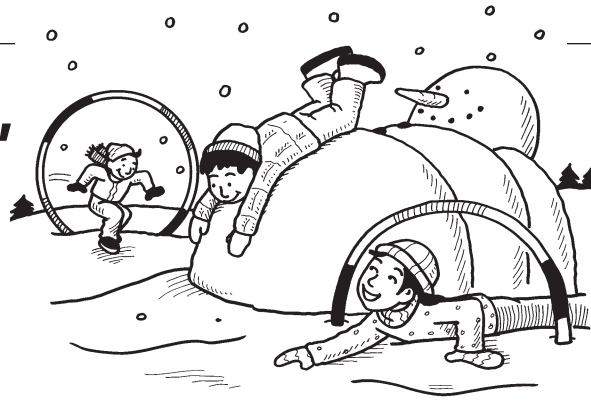


Over, under, around, and through

Inside or outside, obstacle courses are a fun way for your child to get exercise. With these three ideas, she'll find that winter weather is no obstacle to fun!

1. Soft landing

Push back furniture in the living room or family room, or use an open space in the basement. Then, set up a course with soft objects such as pillows to jump over, rows of stuffed animals to crawl through, sofa cushions to weave around, and a beanbag chair to land in at the end.



2. Snow

Half the fun—and half the exercise—of a snowy obstacle course is making it. Together, form snow mounds of different sizes and shapes to climb or jump over. Make deep footprints to walk in. Add hula hoops to jump in and out of, and create a trail of stones in an “S” shape to walk along.

3. Activities

On separate index cards, write directions for activities. *Examples:* Do jumping jacks while saying the alphabet. Do forward rolls to the next obstacle. Stomp on bubble wrap. Then, set up an obstacle course with an activity card at each stop. Have two players start at opposite ends and do the activities along the way. The first player to the opposite end wins. ●

PARENT TO PARENT

Handling holiday sweets

When holiday season rolls around, I always have the same problem. There are treats everywhere, and I'm not sure how much to let my kids eat.

This year I asked my neighbor Barbara, who is a dietitian, for advice. She agreed this is a tricky problem—if we don't let our children have *any* cookies and cake, they'll want them even more. And, she said, weight gained over holidays tends to stay on children *and* adults.

Barbara recommended letting our kids have some treats but talking to them about “moderation.” We could decide on something like one sweet a day, and they get to pick it.

She also suggested other ways to make the holiday season healthier, such as drinking water instead of soda or punch and taking a family walk after meals. I know the holidays will be challenging eating-wise, but I'm happy to have a plan. ●



ACTIVITY CORNER

Family time

Getting together with family this month? Build in active fun with these ideas.

Find the pennies. Hide pennies around the house or yard. Announce how many are hidden, set a timer, and start hunting. The person who returns with the most wins that round—and gets to hide the pennies next.

Have an orange race. Team up in pairs, and mark start and finish lines. Have each pair face each other and, with their hands behind their backs, hold an orange forehead-to-forehead. Then, the pairs race against each other—the first to reach the finish line without dropping their orange wins.

Skate inside. Create an indoor rink by taping plastic (picnic tablecloths, trash bags cut open) to an uncarpeted floor. For “skates,” tape wax paper to sneakers, glide in empty shoeboxes, or slide on paper plates. *Idea:* Play “freeze skate.” Turn on music, and when you switch it off, the skaters have to freeze. If they don't, they're out. ●



IN THE KITCHEN

Pancake house

Pancakes are a favorite breakfast for most children. Here are ways to make them a healthier breakfast, too:

- Have your youngster top his pancakes with his favorite flavor of nonfat yogurt and fresh or frozen fruit like sliced strawberries or peaches.
- When making your own pancakes, add fiber by using whole-wheat flour. Also, you can substitute

applesauce for the oil to make pancakes that are not as high in fat.

- Stir fruit into pancake batter. In addition to blueberries, you could try diced apples or mashed bananas. The pancakes will be naturally sweet—so your child can use less syrup.

- When cooking pancakes, spray the skillet with a cooking spray. You'll save calories and fat by not frying them in butter or oil. ●



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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