

Nutrition Nuggets

Food and Fitness for a Healthy Child

September 2018



BEST BITES

Wash your hands

Want to lower the chance of your child getting sick or spreading germs? Make it a family habit to wash hands regularly—and always before preparing food or eating. Scrub with soap and warm water for at least 20 seconds, about the time it takes to sing the alphabet song.

Balance like a squirrel

Fun fact: Squirrels use their tails for balance as they scurry across branches. For a playful way to work on balance, have your child pretend she's a squirrel. Let her use chalk to draw a line on the sidewalk. She can run along the line, one foot in front of the other. Ask how *she* balances (perhaps with her arms out at her sides).



DID YOU KNOW?

Your youngster could eat a different kind of apple every day for 20 years! That's because apples come in more than 7,500 varieties. Challenge him to count the types at your grocery store or farmers' market. He could keep a list of ones he tries, perhaps putting a star beside his favorites. *Bonus:* They're *all* excellent sources of fiber and good sources of vitamin C.

Just for fun

Q: What has to be broken to be used?

A: An egg.



Routines for healthy eating

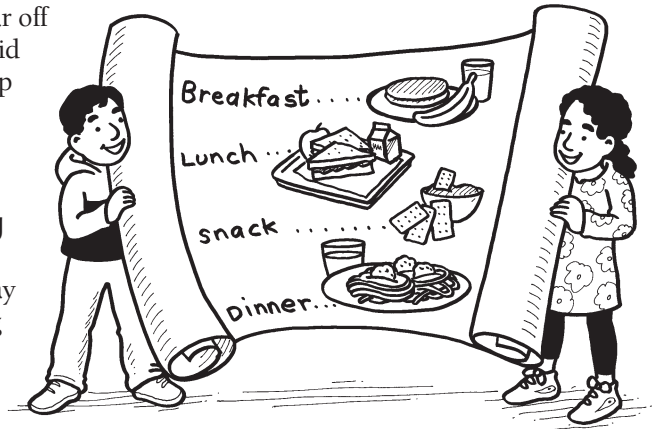
Starting a new school year off right includes setting up solid routines for eating well. Help your youngster map out a good strategy for each part of her day.

Jump-start the morning

A healthy breakfast prepares your child for a full day of learning. Consider letting her eat breakfast in the school cafeteria. She'll save time and get a balanced meal with whole grains, protein, low-fat dairy, and fruit. *Idea:* Have her make a "breakfast tracker" chart. Every day, she could draw a different-colored star for each food group she ate from.

Boost afternoon energy

Your youngster will want a snack to tide her over until dinnertime—make sure it's a nutritious one! She might pack whole-wheat crackers, hummus, and grapes to munch on at after-school care. Or if she comes right home after school,



she could eat half of a turkey and tomato sandwich with a glass of milk before she tackles homework.

Fuel up at dinner

Try to eat dinner together, even on busy evenings. Fitting dinner prep into your morning routine is one way to make this happen. For example, put chili ingredients into a slow cooker. Another idea is to prepare the night before, perhaps marinating chicken and cutting up vegetables. ♥

"Fall" for physical activity

The longer, warmer days of summer are winding down. Use these ideas to keep up your child's physical activity when fall arrives.

● **Be active in school:** Encourage your youngster to wear sneakers every day so he's comfortable playing at recess. He might also join an after-school activity like a running club or a kickball team.

● **Take advantage of daylight:** Let your child play outside right after school or child care. Consider saving chores for after dinner.

● **Dress appropriately:** It's great to play outside year round. In cooler weather, layers are ideal because your youngster can shed them as exercise warms him up. ♥



Books that inspire good nutrition

Picture books offer a fun way to drive home messages about healthy eating. They can also encourage picky eaters to be more adventurous. Here are topics, books, and activities for getting started—ask your child’s school librarian for more book recommendations.



Topic: Cooking

Book picks: *Growing Vegetable Soup* (Lois Ehlert), *Good Enough to Eat* (Lizzy Rockwell)

Activity: Follow a recipe from the book together, but let your child put his own twist on it. Maybe he’ll add mini whole-wheat pasta shells to soup or make yogurt pops with his own combinations of fruit.

Topic: Fruits and vegetables

Book picks: *Blueberries for Sal* (Robert McCloskey), *Creepy Carrots!* (Aaron Reynolds)

Activity: Talk about how the characters prepared their fruits and veggies, and brainstorm different ways to serve them in your home. You could make blueberry and cottage cheese “pizzas” on English muffins or put together a carrot-and-raisin salad.

Topic: Picky eaters

Book picks: *Gregory, the Terrible Eater* (Mitchell Sharmat), *The Seven Silly Eaters* (Mary Ann Hoberman)

Activity: Ask your youngster to draw a picture of foods that both he and the characters like to eat. Now have him draw a food that they might all want to try! ♥

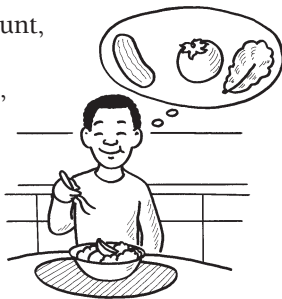


PARENT TO PARENT

Mindful eating

I recently read that “mindless eating” can lead to overeating and weight gain. I recognized my son in this article—sometimes I feel like he inhales his food without even tasting it!

I asked my aunt, who works in a school cafeteria, for advice. She suggested that we make it a habit at meal-time to slow down and talk about what we’re



eating. She said a good trick is to close your eyes while chewing so you can concentrate on the textures and flavors.

My aunt also said we should turn off the TV so we focus on our food rather than on a show. I’m hoping that eating “mindfully” will slow my son down—and help him realize when he’s full so that he doesn’t overeat. ♥

ACTIVITY CORNER

Take a hike, family-style!

Hiking is a heart-healthy activity that also strengthens your youngster’s (and your) muscles. Try these tips for a successful family adventure:

- Stop by the visitor center or ranger station at a state or national park, or search online for “family-friendly hikes” in your area. Choose a trail that’s suited to your child’s stamina and ability by considering the distance and the terrain (hilly or flat, rocky or smooth).
- Build in stops to share a healthy snack, rest, and appreciate nature. Together, make a list of things to spot (moss growing on a rock, a red bird, a furry animal, a yellow flower). Let your youngster bring a magnifying glass for a close-up look at bugs and plants. Or have her pack a sketchpad and crayons so she can create crayon rubbings of tree bark or draw the view from scenic overlooks. ♥



IN THE KITCHEN

Stuffed veggies

With these nutritious recipes, your youngster can have her “bowl” and eat it, too.

Chicken-salad tomatoes

Combine 3 cups cooked, shredded chicken with $\frac{1}{4}$ cup chopped celery and 3 tbsp. light mayonnaise. Cut 3 large tomatoes in half, and remove the insides. Divide the chicken salad into the tomato halves.

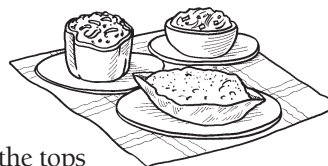
Cheeseburger peppers

Cook 1 lb. lean ground turkey. Drain fat, and stir in $\frac{1}{4}$ cup diced onions. Slice off the tops of 3 bell peppers, and remove the seeds.

Fill with the turkey mixture, and top each pepper with 2 tbsp. shredded cheddar. Bake at 350° for 25 minutes.

Apple-cinnamon sweet potatoes

Pierce 4 sweet potatoes a few times with a fork, and bake at 425° for 45 minutes. Cut the potatoes in half. Scoop out the insides, and mash them in a bowl with 1 apple (peeled and chopped), 1 tbsp. butter, 1 tbsp. brown sugar, and $\frac{1}{4}$ tsp. cinnamon. Spoon into each potato half. ♥



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Resources for Educators,
a division of CCH Incorporated
128 N. Royal Avenue • Front Royal, VA 22630
800-394-5052 • rfeustomer@wolterskluwer.com
www.rfeonline.com

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BEST BITES

Cut the salt

Many jarred and canned foods—like pasta sauce, soup, and gravy—are high in sodium. Consider making your own versions when possible. Instead of salt, add herbs and spices for flavor. *Tip:* Let your child find a new sauce, soup, or gravy recipe she wants to try, and make it together.

What did you do in PE today?

When you talk to your youngster about his day at school, ask about PE class. You'll show him that physical activity is important. Which activities does he like best? Turn his favorites, such as hula-hooping, into a family activity night. He can be the "teacher" and show everyone how to keep the hoops spinning longer.



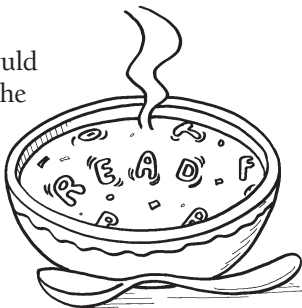
DID YOU KNOW?

Some fruits and vegetables—including apples, bananas, tomatoes, potatoes, and avocados—give off a gas that makes other produce ripen faster. Prevent spoilage by keeping them separate. Or use this to your advantage! Ripen a green banana by sealing it in a brown paper bag with an apple.

Just for fun

Q: Why did Sam want alphabet soup for lunch?

A: So he could read while he was eating.



Build character with family meals

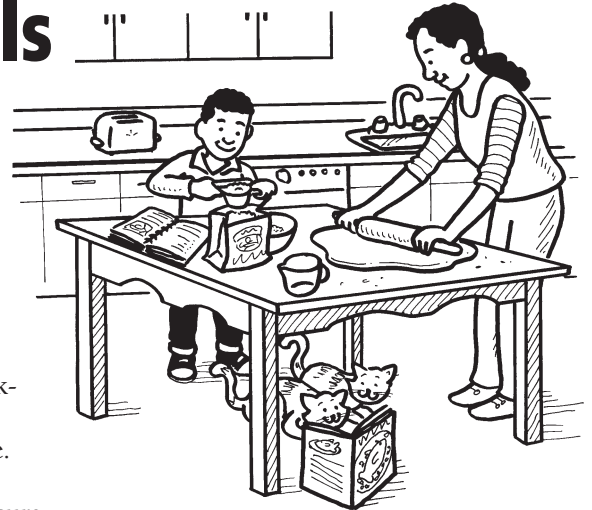
Family meals let you share healthy foods and bond with your youngster. They also offer the chance to instill character traits like independence, politeness, and responsibility. Try these ideas.

Develop kitchen skills

Teaching your child basic cooking skills is a great way to boost his confidence and independence. Depending on his age, he could squeeze juice from a lemon, measure and mix ingredients, crack eggs, or follow a simple recipe. While the two of you work, talk about healthy cooking methods like steaming vegetables or baking chicken instead of frying it.

Eat politely

The family dinner table is the perfect place for your youngster to practice manners and graciousness. As you pass dishes around, model saying "Thank you" and "You're welcome" so he will do the same. Also, talk about how to be polite if he's not sure he likes something, perhaps by



taking a small amount and trying a bite or two. *Tip:* Be sure to remind him to thank the cook.

Use teamwork to clean up

Your child can learn about cooperation and responsibility by pitching in after a meal. Give each person a job like carrying dirty dishes to the sink or wiping off the table and counters. You might also show your youngster how to put leftovers into containers, label with the contents and date, and store in the refrigerator or freezer. ♥

Fun autumn outings

Get your youngster moving with active outings perfect for the season. Here are suggestions.

● **Pumpkin farm.** Your child could run through a corn maze or navigate an obstacle course at a local pumpkin patch. Let her pick the perfect pumpkin to take home—then carve it, and roast the seeds for a healthy snack.

● **Fall festival.** Look in the newspaper or online for events like a harvest festival with fun runs, relay races, or other activities for kids. If there's live music, encourage your youngster to dance to the beat! ♥



Looking for grocery "treasure"

The next time you go grocery shopping, bring your youngster along for a "treasure hunt" to find healthy foods. You'll teach her to make good choices in every aisle.

Produce section. Ask your child to look for a fruit grown in your state. Or let her seek out vegetables of a particular color (say, orange or purple). Another idea is to search for an exotic fruit she's never tried, perhaps jackfruit or guava.



Meat department. Challenge your youngster to compare ground meats like beef, turkey, and chicken. She can put the one with the least fat and sodium into your cart. Also, have her look for cuts of steak or pork that include the word "round" or "loin"—explain that these are typically leaner.

Dairy case. Have your child name her favorite flavor of yogurt, perhaps blueberry or vanilla. Then, help her read nutrition labels to look for the one that's labeled "nonfat" and has fewer than 10 grams of sugar

and at least 5 grams of protein. Or she could search for cheese labeled "part skim" or "made with 2% milk." ♡

Q&A

Why whole grains?

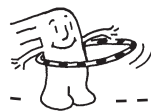
Q: I know whole grains are healthy. But how can I explain to my daughter why they're good for her and get her to eat them?

A: Here's a fun way to present this: Tell your child that a whole grain is like a superhero with a cape! Whole grains contain the entire grain kernel, while processing removes the nutrient-rich *bran* (the "cape," or outer part) and *germ* from refined grains.



You can also explain that whole grains give her more energy to run faster and play with her friends. They help her think better at school, too.

To get your child used to eating more whole grains, try mixing brown and white rice or whole-wheat and regular pasta—half and half. Then gradually increase the whole grains. Once she gets used to the flavor, she probably won't even miss refined grains. ♡



ACTIVITY CORNER

Fairy tale workouts

Your child can get exercise while acting out scenes from his favorite fairy tales. Share these activities.



The Gingerbread Man

Have your youngster draw a gingerbread man on brown construction paper and cut it out. Then, one player hides it while the others run around to find it. The first person to spot the "cookie" gets to hide it next.

Jack and the Beanstalk

At the playground, let your child climb up a ladder or rock wall. He's Jack climbing the beanstalk high into the sky to see what's at the top!

Hansel and Gretel

Suggest that your youngster collect a dozen pebbles and pretend they're breadcrumbs. He can skip along a path, scattering them behind him one at a time. When he has dropped them all, he could skip back, bending down to pick them up. ♡

IN THE KITCHEN

Not your average breakfast

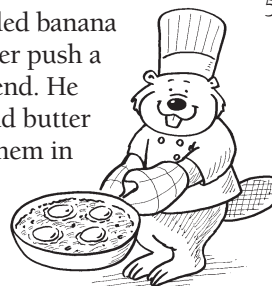
Take a break from scrambled eggs and cereal with these unusual breakfast recipes that you and your child can make together.

Banana pops: Cut a peeled banana in half. Let your youngster push a craft stick into each cut end. He can spread 1 tbsp. almond butter over each half, and roll them in $\frac{1}{2}$ cup crushed granola.

Shakshuka: Add 2 cups marinara sauce and a pinch each of coriander

and cumin to a frying pan. Simmer on medium-high heat until it comes to a boil. Crack 4 eggs into the sauce, each one in a separate spot. Cover, and cook 5–8 minutes on low heat. Serve with pita wedges.

PB&J in a bowl: In a blender, mix $\frac{3}{4}$ cup nonfat milk, $\frac{1}{2}$ cup frozen pineapple, $\frac{1}{2}$ cup frozen mixed berries, and 2 tbsp. peanut butter. Pour into a bowl, and top with halved fresh strawberries or grapes. ♡



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