

Nutrition Nuggets

Food and Fitness for a Healthy Child

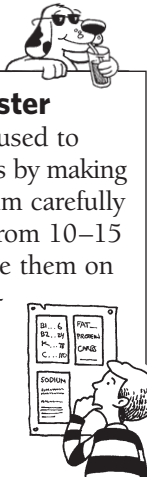
October 2008

McAllen Independent School District

BEST BITES

Nutrition poster

Get your child used to reading food labels by making a poster together. Have him carefully cut the nutrition panels from 10–15 empty food packages, glue them on a poster board, and color-code each part. *Example:* Highlight saturated fat in yellow, underline fiber in blue, circle calcium in green.

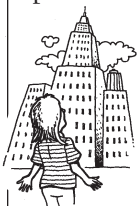


DID YOU KNOW?

As much as a third of children's daily calories comes from snacks, dessert, and pizza. Try to serve wholesome snacks, keep calories low on desserts, and order pizza only occasionally. *Tip:* For a healthy pizza-flavored snack, put a dab of tomato sauce on whole-wheat crackers, sprinkle with skim mozzarella cheese, and microwave.

Step to it

The Empire State Building has 1,860 steps. Count your stairs (*example:* 14), and tape a picture of the New York landmark nearby. Each time someone goes up or down your steps, she makes a tally mark on the picture until your family has climbed all 1,860 steps (133 trips).

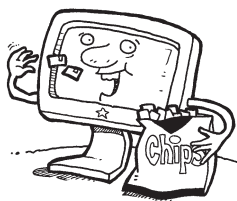


Then, inspire more stair climbing with a new goal. Next stop: the Eiffel Tower (1,710 steps).

Just for fun

Q: What do computers eat for lunch?

A: Chips.



Picky eaters

"Yuk! I'm not eating dinner. I don't like anything here."

If you have a picky eater in your house—and most families do—take heart. There are some easy ways to get through this stage.

Make mealtime fun

Keep conversation light, and don't argue about what your child will or won't eat. Serve small portions, and encourage him to try a bite of each item. If he says he doesn't like it, don't push him to eat more. Staying calm can keep food from becoming a power struggle between you and your youngster.

Involve your child

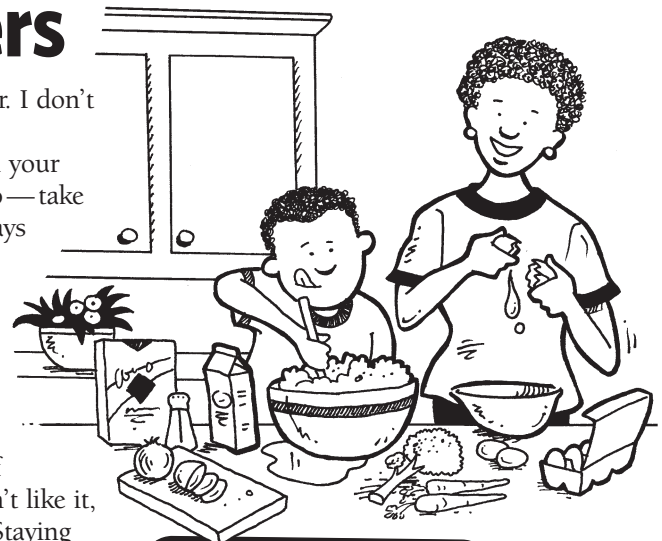
Have your child help you shop for food, pick out recipes, and make dinner. Talk about how to build a healthy meal, and give him choices. *Examples:* "Should we have grilled chicken or fish?" "Would you prefer green beans or asparagus?" Having a say lets him feel more in control—and he'll be more likely to eat what is served.

Don't give up

Over time, your youngster's tastes will change. For foods he has turned down before, try offering them in a different way. For instance, make "carrot fries" (toss carrot sticks with olive oil, salt, and pepper, and bake at 425° until tender and browned). Your child who "hated" carrots might love this version!

Watch the clock

Try to make sure your youngster is hungry for meals. Encourage him to be busy with homework or play before dinner, and "close the kitchen" (no snacks or drinks) an hour before mealtime.



Keep teeth healthy

Eating too many sweets not only leads to weight gain—it also leads to cavities. Help keep your child's teeth healthy with these suggestions:

- Limit sticky items like chewy candy (caramel, toffee), fruit snacks, and cheese crackers.
- Avoid soda and sugary foods that linger on the teeth, such as lollipops, hard candy, and gum. Tell your youngster that drinking and eating those things are like giving her teeth "a sugar bath."
- Have your child drink mostly water or milk. If she has juice, make it 100 percent, and dilute it with seltzer or water.
- Serve cheese at meals or snacktime. Cheeses like cheddar, Monterey Jack, and Swiss increase the flow of saliva, which helps wash food away from teeth.

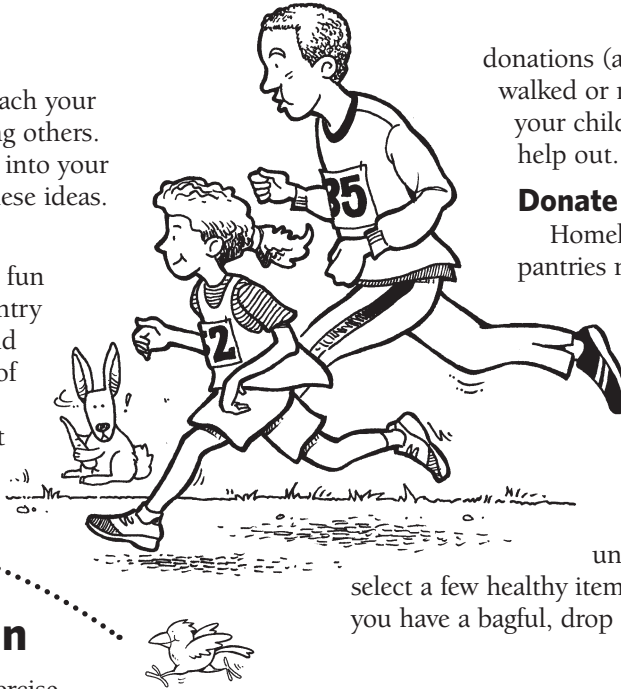


Giving back

Volunteering is a great way to teach your youngster the importance of helping others. You can build fitness and nutrition into your family's community service with these ideas.

Run, walk, or jump

Look for local races, walks, "kid fun runs," or jump rope events. Your entry fee will go toward a good cause, and you and your child will get plenty of exercise as you run, walk, or jump rope together. Some events ask that your youngster get pledges for



donations (a quarter, a dollar) for each mile walked or minute spent jumping rope. Perhaps your child can ask relatives and neighbors to help out.

Donate food

Homeless shelters and community food pantries need items year-round. With your youngster, list nutritious foods you could donate (canned vegetables, whole-grain cereal, peanut butter). *Note:* Explain that they have to be items that don't need to be refrigerated.

Then, encourage your child to "shop" in your own kitchen for unopened items to donate. Or let her select a few healthy items each time you go shopping. When you have a bagful, drop them off together. ♥

ACTIVITY CORNER

Family exercise fun

Families that exercise together get fit together! Turn exercise time into fun time with this kid-friendly routine.

■ **Be chairs.** Standing with your back flat against a wall, slide down into a squatting position. Together, time yourselves to see how long each person can do a "wall sit."



■ **Be bicycles.** Lying flat on your back, move your legs in the air around and around—just like you're pedaling the wheels of your bikes.

■ **Be mirrors.** You might touch your toes, and then your child touches her toes. Twirl around, and she twirls around. Switch roles and let her take the lead while you're the mirror.

■ **Be shapes.** Work together to make triangles, squares, and circles with your bodies. Your youngster will practice geometry skills while moving her arms and legs into place. ♥

Q & A No meat — now what?

Q: My son has decided he wants to be a vegetarian. How can I make sure he eats a healthy diet?

A: Don't worry—with just a little planning, your child can get all the vitamins and nutrients he needs.

Variety is important, so stock up on different fruits and vegetables, whole grains, beans, nuts, seeds, and meat substitutes, such as tofu hot dogs or veggie burgers. If your youngster's eating fish or dairy, foods like tuna, salmon, eggs, yogurt, cheese, and milk will also give him valuable protein.

Remember that as long as your son doesn't load up on empty calories (candy, soda), his meat-free diet can help keep him from being overweight or at risk for heart disease or other illnesses. ♥



IN THE KITCHEN

Apple time

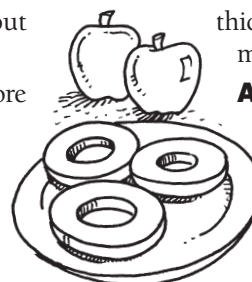
A crisp autumn day is the perfect time for a snack made from apples. Take advantage of apple season to get your youngster enjoying this healthy fruit.

Baked Apple: Mix together raisins or dried cherries, cinnamon, and a little brown sugar. Core an apple, and spoon the mixture into the hole. Drizzle on a little honey, and bake at 375° until the apple is soft (about 40 minutes).

Dried Apple Rings: Peel and core an apple, and slice it into thin rings. Place on a cookie sheet (coated with nonstick spray), and bake at 250° for 2 hours.

Apple Oatmeal: Bring 1 cup water, ¼ cup apple juice, and 1 diced apple to a boil. Stir in ⅔ cup rolled oats and ¼ tsp. cinnamon. Return to a boil, reduce heat, and simmer until thick. Serve with fat-free milk.

Apple Wedges: Roll apple wedges in whipped cream cheese and then in chopped nuts or low-fat granola. ♥



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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