

Nutrition Nuggets

Food and Fitness for a Healthy Child

September 2008

McAllen Independent School District

BEST BITES

Single servings

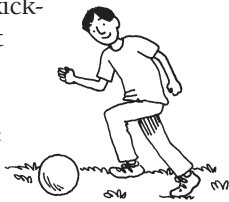
Keep portable snacks handy—and hold your food budget down—by buying items in bulk and making your own single-serve bags. Check portion sizes on nutrition labels of cereal, baked crackers, or nuts, and fill zipper bags with one serving each.



Then, your child can grab a nutritious snack quickly.

Active recess

Try to make sure your youngster gets exercise during recess. At dinner, discuss active things he can do the next day (climb on the jungle gym, jump rope, play kick-ball). Suggest that he ask his classmates to join in, and recess will be even more fun.



DID YOU KNOW?

Kids with TVs in their bedrooms are at higher risk of being overweight. Why? Because they spend more hours watching shows, which usually means more snacking and less exercise. Consider limiting television to the family room, where you can monitor your child's TV habits.

Just for fun

Q: What do you get when you cross a cow with a trampoline?



A: A milkshake!

School days

Now that school has begun, your child will spend about six hours a day there. How can you be sure she'll eat well during that time? Try these suggestions.

Read the menu

Post the cafeteria menu on your refrigerator, and have your youngster circle the meals she wants to buy. Discuss ways to make healthy choices (visit the salad bar, skip the ice cream). Many school menus or Web sites give detailed nutrition information to help guide you. *Note:* If your child takes her lunch, limit foods like chips and sweets.



might want help with the school store (giving you a chance for input on the food sold there). If you have time, volunteer as a cafeteria aide—and you'll be able to see lunchtime first-hand. ♥

Discuss allergies

If your youngster has food allergies, alert the cafeteria manager, her teacher, and the school nurse. Give each of them a list of foods she's allergic to, possible reactions, and what to do if she accidentally eats one of them.

Send healthy food

Take in nutritious foods for your child's birthday, class parties, or school events. You could try sliced watermelon, boxes of raisins, or raw vegetables (carrots, celery) with hummus or guacamole as a dip. *Note:* Check your school's policy to see what is allowed.

Get involved

Ask the principal how you can help. Maybe she needs a parent to serve on the school wellness committee. Or she

Healthy substitutions

Want to serve your family healthier food? Just make these simple changes:

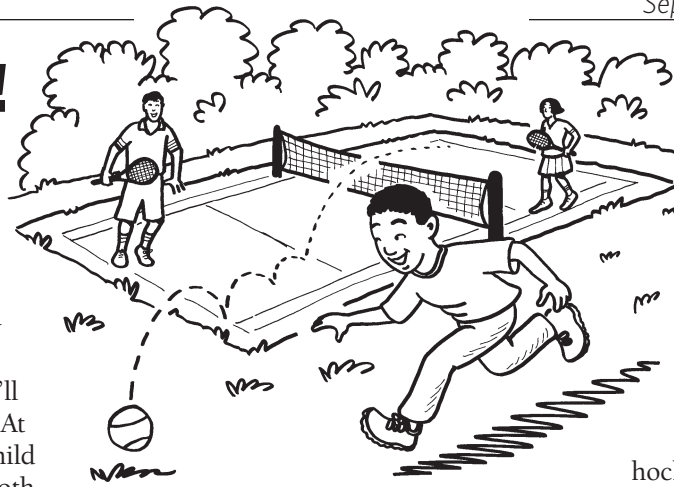
- Use cooking spray or nonstick pans instead of sautéing with butter or vegetable oil.
- Buy low-fat or fat-free salad dressings.
- Top baked potatoes with low-fat cheese or honey mustard instead of butter and sour cream.
- Use turkey bacon, and microwave rather than fry it.
- Substitute applesauce for half of the butter or oil in a cake recipe.
- Buy canned fruits packed in water or their own juices (not in heavy syrup).
- Use crushed bran cereal instead of bread crumbs to coat chicken or meat. ♥



Show them the way!

One of the best ways to get your child exercising is for him to see *you* exercising. Try to set a good example, and both of you will benefit by being fitter and healthier. Here are some ideas:

- Take your youngster along when you play tennis or work out at the gym. He can play with his own ball on the sidelines—and he'll probably love chasing after the ball for you! At the gym, he may be able to play games in child care. On the way out, talk about how you both had fun "exercising."
- When you work out at home (ride a stationary bike, lift weights), let your child see you. Make a point of mentioning



what you're doing. "I'm going to walk on the treadmill now. Want to come talk to me?"

● Show your youngster that you enjoy running around by playing with him. Have a hockey game on the school blacktop over the weekend. Get the family outside for volleyball using a clothesline as a net. *Tip:* Follow your child's lead. See what games he wants to play, and join in. ♥

ACTIVITY CORNER Thinking games

Start the school year off right with these three games that combine school skills with physical activity. Your children will have fun while using their brains and their bodies!



1. Hold a scavenger race. Make a list of items found outdoors (acorn, pointy leaf, pebble). Give each person a bag, and see who can gather all the items first. *Safety Tip:* Keep your youngsters in sight, or have players pair up.

2. Let your child write the alphabet in chalk on the sidewalk or your driveway. Call out his spelling words, and he can spell them by hopping to each letter.

3. Play weather charades. Players take turns acting out types of weather (lightning, windy, hurricane). The others have to guess what they are. ♥

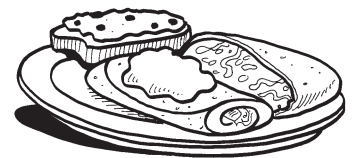
IN THE KITCHEN Sandwich time

What kid doesn't love a sandwich? Vary the usual peanut butter-and-jelly routine with these ideas for healthy and delicious lunches and snacks.

Veggie pockets. Cut off the end of a whole-wheat pita. Fill the pocket with cooked brown rice, microwaved vegetables (green beans, corn, peas), and shredded mozzarella cheese. Drizzle on low-fat ranch or French dressing.

Festive fajitas. Put leftover chicken and thin strips of red and green peppers on a spinach or tomato tortilla. Top with salsa, and roll up. *Variation:* First, sauté the bell peppers with onions in a little olive oil.

Thanksgiving anytime. Mix together canned cranberry sauce and light mayonnaise, and spread on two slices of whole-grain bread. Add slices of lean turkey, and press together. ♥



PARENT TO PARENT To market we go

When I told my neighbor that my daughters didn't eat enough vegetables, she had a great idea. "They like to draw, don't they?" Angie asked. She suggested that I take the girls, along with their sketch pads and crayons, to a local farmer's market.

When we got there, the girls were excited to see all the different colors and shapes, and they couldn't

wait to start drawing. Alicia drew pictures of big red tomatoes and purple eggplants, and Stacy sketched bunches of radishes and carrots with the tops still on.

Now both girls are making their pictures into books, complete with captions describing each vegetable.

We're planning to use their books to pick out new vegetables to try for dinner!



Editor's Note: Look online at www.localharvest.org/farmers-markets to find a market near you. ♥

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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