

Nutrition Nuggets

Food and Fitness for a Healthy Child

September 2020

Montgomery County Schools

BEST BITES

Nutritious and on sale

Each time you get a new grocery advertising circular, let your child cut out pictures of healthy foods he wants to eat that week. He could glue them on paper to make an illustrated grocery list. Then, he can use his list when you go to the store or shop online together.

Be an example

Your youngster watches what you do. So if you go for a run or a bike ride, mention it to her. Or better yet, invite her to join you! Take walks with her after dinner, follow along with a yoga video, or announce that it's time for morning stretches. You'll put her on the path toward developing a lifelong fitness habit.



DID YOU KNOW?

Many beans and other legumes are “two-fers”—they belong to both the protein and vegetable food groups. To add more legumes to your child's diet, use pinto beans in tacos, toss chickpeas into salads, and stir lentils into soups. *Note:* Green beans, green lima beans, and green peas count only as vegetables.

Just for fun

Q: Why do you go to bed every night?

A: Because your bed won't come to you.



A healthy start

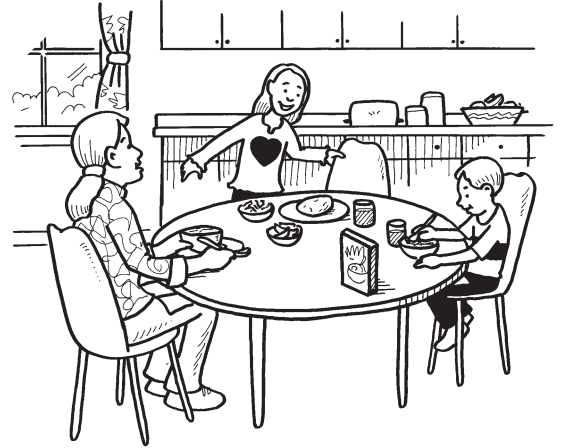
Many things may have changed in your youngster's world this year, but here's one that remains the same: She needs a balanced diet to stay healthy. Here are answers to questions you might have as the new school year gets in full swing.

Q: *My daughter says she's not hungry for breakfast when she wakes up. What can I do?*

A: A complete breakfast gives your child energy and helps her focus in school. Have her do the rest of her morning routine before she eats, or let her eat in school if that's an option. Also, she may be more interested if she gets to eat something other than breakfast foods. You could heat up last night's leftovers, or microwave a baked potato and let her pick the toppings.

Q: *My child wants to snack all day when she's home. How can I encourage good habits?*

A: Your daughter may not be eating enough at meals if she's hungry soon afterward. Discourage snacking 1–2 hours before each meal so she comes to



the table with a healthy appetite. When she does snack, suggest healthy options like snap peas or pumpkin seeds.

Q: *We've been eating at home a lot more lately. Any tips for making family meals more interesting?*

A: Ask your youngster to think of fun themes, such as Macaroni Monday or Souper Saturday. Or if you normally like going out for Thai or Mexican food, look up recipes for your favorite dishes and make them together. When the weather is nice, you might find a nice spot and eat outdoors. ♥

Gym-in-a-box

Encourage your child to get more physical activity with a portable “gym.” Let him fill a big box or bin with fun equipment, then find creative ways to use it. Share these ideas to get him started.

- **Bubble wrap.** See how fast you can pop all the bubbles with your feet.
- **Twister mat.** Starting with each hand or foot on separate circles, do cartwheels or crab walks (walking on all fours—but upside down).
- **Hula-hoop.** Lay the hoop on the floor, and jump in and out of it 10 times. ♥



Creative cooking for kids

Want to boost the odds that your child will eat healthy foods? Do kid-friendly activities like these.

Play with shapes. Let your youngster use cookie cutters to make shapes from food. He might be more apt to eat spinach and mushroom quesadillas if they're shaped like dinosaurs. Or maybe he'll try cucumber and cream cheese sandwiches if he gets to cut them into star shapes.

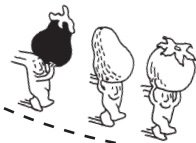
Add color. Does your child hesitate over whole grains? Try this. Ask him to squish



raspberries or blueberries in a colander and strain the juice into a bowl. Now let him stir the berry pieces, along with some whole berries, into batter for whole-grain pancakes or muffins. Be sure to save the "dye" so he can use a pastry brush to paint his cooked treat with the fruit juice!

Make pictures. Suggest that your youngster create a masterpiece on his plate. Offer a few healthy foods—including some he enjoys and others he's not as keen

on. He might make low-fat cottage cheese "clouds" and a pineapple "sun" shining down on a field of "flowers" with green bean "stems" and strawberry "petals." ♡



PARENT TO PARENT

Smart swaps

During the spring and summer, we took fewer trips to the grocery store, which meant we didn't always have the ingredients we needed. The good news is, I learned to swap in different ingredients, and sharing my discoveries with my son Blake has helped him be more flexible about what he eats.

I asked Blake to make a chart labeled "Don't have that? Use this!" For example, when we ran out of

butter to bake oatmeal raisin cookies,

I used an equal amount of mashed over-ripe bananas instead. When we didn't have

pasta or ground beef, I made couscous, stirred in pasta sauce, and heated up frozen turkey meatballs to put on top.

Each time we substitute an ingredient, Blake adds it to the chart so we remember for next time. We often discover that foods taste just as good—and sometimes even better—with a creative swap. ♡



ACTIVITY CORNER

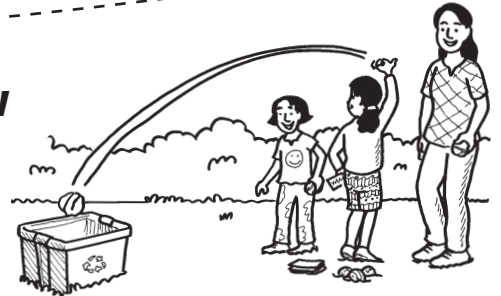
Aim and throw

Help your youngster get exercise and improve her throwing skills with these backyard games.

Materials: 10 beanbags (or balled-up pairs of socks), empty recycling bin or other large container

1. Underhand, overhand. Have your child stand 10 feet from the bin, and set a timer while she throws the beanbags underhanded into it. Throw back to her any that land on the ground. She must catch them and throw them into the bin—this time throwing overhanded. How quickly can she sink all 10 bags?

2. Throwing challenges. Ask your youngster to write five challenges on separate index cards. *Examples:* "Use the hand you don't normally throw with." "Lift one leg and throw under it." "Throw backward over your shoulder." Take turns selecting a card and using that motion to throw a beanbag into the bin (from 10 feet away). The first person to complete all of the throws wins. ♡



IN THE KITCHEN

Rice bowls

For an easy, healthy approach to dinner, get the whole family involved. Just cook a batch of brown rice, and try these build-your-own rice bowls.

Put an egg on it

Add: raw vegetables (shredded carrots, baby kale leaves, diced cucumbers, thinly sliced scallions) and a sunny-side-up egg

Top with: sesame seeds and a drizzle of low-sodium soy sauce

Burrito in a bowl

Add: cooked black beans, halved pitted black olives, and low-fat shredded cheddar cheese

Top with: avocado chunks and salsa

How about some hummus?

Add: mixed oven-roasted vegetables, such as brussels sprouts, broccoli, butter-nut squash, and sweet potatoes

Top with: hummus sauce (slowly whisk warm water into hummus until it's the consistency of salad dressing) ♡



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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