

Nutrition Nuggets

Food and Fitness for a Healthy Child

TROY AREA SCHOOL DISTRICT
MS BONNIE BIXBY, FOOD SERVICES DIRECTOR

BEST BITES

Thank you, cafeteria staff

Does your child know all the things that the school cafeteria staff does? Together, brainstorm a list. (Examples: Cooks meals. Puts the food out. Smiles and says hello to all the children. Encourages us to try new foods.) Suggest that your youngster write a note or draw a picture thanking the cafeteria folks for all they do!

Kangaroo hop

Try this fitness idea from Down Under. Have your children hop like kangaroos by jumping with both feet and holding their hands in front of their chests. They can race each other by hopping from one end of a room or yard to the other. Or they could take turns being the leader and follow the Kangaroo.



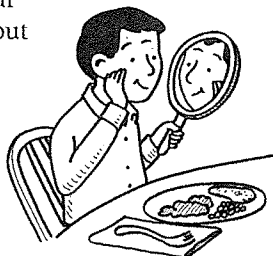
DID YOU KNOW?

Research shows that students who skip breakfast have shorter attention spans and don't do as well on tests. Make sure your youngster gets up in time to have a nutritious breakfast either at home or at school. *Tip:* If she's having trouble waking up early enough, move her bedtime back.

Just for fun

Mom: Eat your spinach. It'll put color in your cheeks.

Jack: But I don't want green cheeks!



Snack attack

Did you know that frequent snacking is tied to obesity? In fact, today's kids average three snacks a day and get about a quarter of their daily calories from between-meal eating. Try these strategies for keeping snacking under control in your family.

Stock the kitchen

Whatever is in the house is what your youngster will eat—so shop with that in mind. Get interesting fruits and vegetables in different colors. Buy mango or peach salsa, and let your child dip in veggie sticks (bell pepper, celery, jicama). Stock popcorn to air pop (rather than getting less healthy microwave popcorn). Then, offer her choices. She'll have a say in what she eats, but she'll be choosing only from healthy foods.

Have a mini-meal

Breakfast or lunch foods can make a good snack. You could serve oatmeal with bananas and cinnamon, or tuck scrambled eggs into a pita pocket. Or try individual pizzas on whole-wheat English muffins. Top each half with a little



tomato sauce, shredded low-fat mozzarella cheese, and sliced mushrooms. Then, bake until the cheese melts.

Build your own

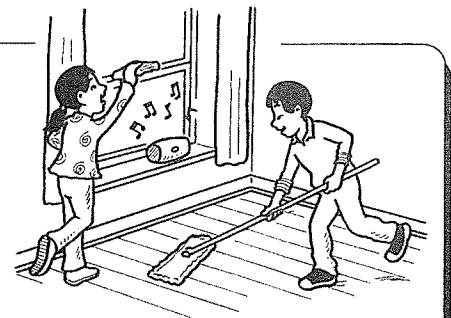
Let your youngster get creative in the kitchen, and she'll be likely to eat the results. She can make kebabs by threading strawberries, melon chunks, and cheese cubes onto toothpicks. Put out cookie cutters for her to cut sandwiches into fun shapes. Or she could spread cream cheese on rice cakes or apple slices and decorate them with raisins or dried cranberries. ♥

Add activity to chores

Help your youngster get fit while building responsibility. Try these suggestions the next time he does chores.

● **Listen to music.** Make an upbeat "chores playlist" together. Your child can dance while both of you wipe down kitchen counters, dust, or sweep. *Tip:* Bring in math by asking him to estimate how long chores will take and create a playlist to fit that time.

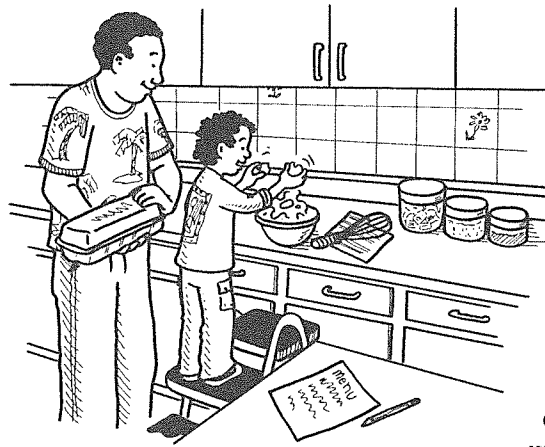
● **Turn it into a game.** To tidy up, each family member is responsible for one room—collecting shoes, toys, books, or papers and putting them where they belong. Set a timer and meet back in the living room when it goes off. Did everyone finish straightening up their room? ♥



Kids in the kitchen

Cooking with your youngster will teach him valuable kitchen skills—and help him practice reading and math. Try these suggestions.

Read recipes. Ask your child to read a recipe aloud. Then, have him gather the ingredients and tools you'll need. Can he find dried oregano and a whisk? Next, follow the steps together. *Idea:* Build his vocabulary by explaining unfamiliar cooking words. (“Zest means to scrape off tiny bits of the lemon peel.”)



Use math. Put your youngster in charge of kitchen math. He can find the correct measuring spoons and cups, measure wet and dry ingredients, and read a food thermometer. He'll also learn about conversions—for example, that 4 tbsp. = $\frac{1}{4}$ cup.

Tip: Get your child in the habit of putting dishes in the dishwasher as he works. That way, there won't be a big sticky mess to clean up at the end. ♡



O&A How much juice?

Q: My child loves to drink juice. Should I try to limit how much of it he drinks?

A: The short answer is “yes.” While juice has nutrients, it also has a lot of sugar.

Believe it or not, a 12-ounce glass of apple juice can contain 10 tsp. of sugar—the same as in a can of cola—and a glass of grape juice can have 15 tsp. of sugar.



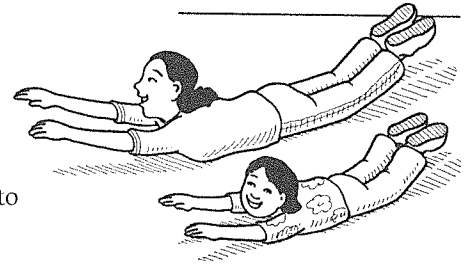
Encourage your son to eat fruit rather than drink juice. He will consume fiber along with more nutrients.

If your youngster does have juice, try to limit it to a glass a day. Choose varieties marked 100 percent juice, and stay away from those labeled “fruit drink” or “fruit cocktail.” The best bets are orange or grapefruit juice since they have more natural vitamin C and less sugar. ♡

ACTIVITY CORNER

Exercise = fun

When children are young, exercise isn't exercise—it's just plain fun! Use these ideas for putting more physical activity into your youngster's day.



Superman

Lie on your tummy with your arms straight out in front of you (as if you're flying). Lift your chest, arms, and legs off the ground at the same time, and hold for five seconds. Lie back down. “Fly” 10 more times.

Bubble jumping jacks

Have your child do jumping jacks as you blow bubbles toward her. How many bubbles can she pop as she jumps? Switch, and let her blow the bubbles as you do jumping jacks.

Freeze dance

Play music, and dance up a storm. When you stop the music, everyone freezes. Hold your poses for 10 seconds, and start the music back up. ♡

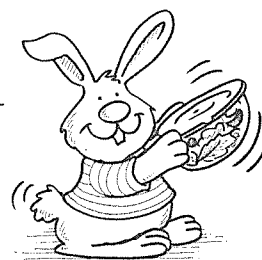
IN THE KITCHEN

Shake-a-salad

Fill, shake, and eat. That's the winning formula behind fun-for-you and good-for-you salad shake-ups.

To assemble: Give your child an empty container. Have her fill it with any of these combinations, put the lid on, and shake, shake, shake.

Deli delight: Chunks of leftover deli meat (lean ham, turkey, or roast beef), shredded part-skim mozzarella cheese, chopped lettuce, grape tomatoes, and low-fat ranch dressing.



Southwest slam: Cooked lean ground beef, chopped lettuce, shredded low-fat cheddar cheese, diced tomatoes, and a sprinkling of low-sodium taco seasoning.

Pasta mix-up: Cooked macaroni, black olives, chopped red pepper, grated Parmesan cheese, and Italian dressing.

Tip: Add something that makes a “shake sound,” such as nuts or baked pita chips, to put even more fun in the shaking. ♡

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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