

Nutrition Nuggets

Food and Fitness for a Healthy Child

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Nurse / Student Health Coordinator



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 did this year!

Teach me

Give your child a chance to be the "PE teacher" at home. For instance, let him teach you a soccer drill or a move from gymnastics class. Or he could lead his little brother in a daily fitness routine. Your youngster will feel special—and the workouts will help keep him in shape.



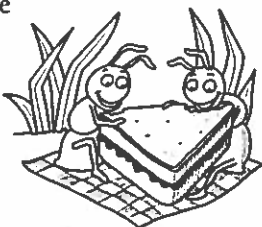
DID YOU KNOW?

Unfortunately, children tend to put on weight over the summer. That's because their days are less structured, there are more opportunities to eat, and they often munch while watching TV. Try to keep your youngsters on a summer schedule that includes physical activity, balanced meals, about 10 hours of sleep, and no more than two hours of screen time a day.

Just for fun

Q: Who comes to a picnic even though they're not invited?

A: Ants.



Tag, you're it!

Ahh, the long days of summer when the weather is beautiful and kids can play for hours outside. Suggest these variations of tag to keep your youngster and her friends running around and having fun!



Vegetable tag

This game will keep vegetables on your child's mind! Before starting, each player names a vegetable ("broccoli"). One person is "It." As It runs toward you, shout another person's vegetable ("eggplant"), and It has to switch direction and try to tag that person instead. When she succeeds in tagging someone, that person becomes It.

Shadow tag

Suggest this version on a sunny day. "It" has to tag another player's shadow with her foot. If she does, that person is the new It. Try the game at different times of day. When is it easiest or hardest to tag

other people's shadows? (Your child will learn a science lesson about how the sun's position in the sky affects the size and shape of shadows.)

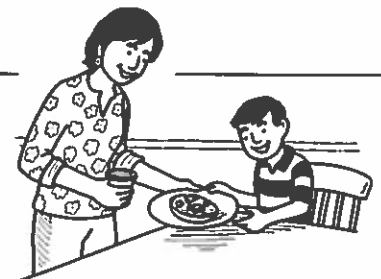
Group tag

This one is great for a group. Two people hold hands and are "It" together. They try to tag other players—using their free hands only. When someone is tagged, that person joins the chain, and the tagging continues with the free hands of the two players on the ends. The last two people tagged become the new It. ♡

Small changes = Big difference

Making a few healthier choices can help your child eat more nutritiously and develop healthy habits at a young age. Consider these suggestions:

- Replace mayonnaise with mustard, mashed avocado, or hummus in sandwiches.
- Use salsa in place of creamy or full-fat salad dressings.
- Instead of chips, serve raw vegetables like green beans or baby carrots with sandwiches.
- Discourage your youngster from adding salt to food by keeping the salt shaker off the table during meals.
- For cooking and salad dressings use healthy oils like olive, canola, sunflower, or safflower. ♡



Kids in the kitchen

What can children do in the kitchen? Lots! Here are ideas for encouraging your youngster to become a (healthy) cook—and enjoy it.

Get excited. Being involved in menu planning can motivate your child to cook and to eat the final product. Let him help you pick out recipes, draw up dinner menus, and shop for food.

Cook together. Depending on your youngster's age and maturity, he could crack eggs, measure ingredients, or prepare a whole meal. It may take longer at first, but the delay will be worth it when you have a child who enjoys preparing and eating healthy food.



Discuss nutrition. As you plan and cook, talk about the healthy decisions you're making. "Using fat-free milk in this recipe means you'll get calcium to make your bones strong." Help him look up the vitamins and minerals in the foods and what they will do for his body. *Note:* You can find this information in library books, online, or on supermarket signs.

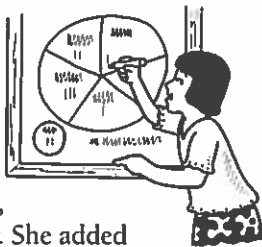
Tip: Make sure your youngster participates in cleanup, too. He'll build responsibility, and it's important that he's part of the whole team effort! ●

PARENT TO PARENT

Track your eating

I've been keeping a food diary to help me lose weight, and my daughter, Ellie, was wondering what I was doing. Ellie isn't overweight, but I suggested that she track her eating, too, to help her eat better.

I hung a dry erase board in the kitchen and had Ellie draw a circle with five sections. Then, we labeled each one: Fruits, Vegetables, Grains, Protein, and Dairy. She added a separate circle for recording sweets and salty snacks.



Each day, Ellie makes tally marks for the foods she eats. At bedtime, she counts her totals and writes them at the bottom. Then, she starts over the next day. She likes that we're both keeping track of our eating, and I'm happy to see her paying more attention to what's on her plate. ●

IN THE KITCHEN

Watermelon treats

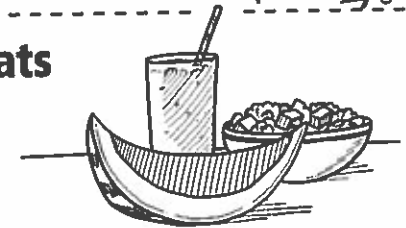
Nothing says summer like a delicious slice of watermelon! But watermelon can also be used in recipes like these.

Salsa

Toss together 3 cups diced seedless watermelon, $\frac{1}{3}$ cup chopped cilantro, $\frac{1}{4}$ cup lime juice, and $\frac{1}{4}$ cup diced onion. To kick up the heat, add 1–2 minced jalapeno peppers. Serve with tacos, chicken, or fish.

Salad

In a large bowl, combine 6 cups arugula (or another green), 2 cups seedless



watermelon chunks, and 1 cup diced feta cheese. Toss lightly with a low-fat vinaigrette.

Slushies

In a blender, combine 3 cups diced seedless watermelon, 2 tbsp. lime juice, 1 tbsp. sugar, $\frac{1}{2}$ cup water, and 1 cup ice. Blend until icy. Makes four slushies. ●

ACTIVITY CORNER

Exploring the great outdoors

Nature is filled with opportunities not only for learning and relaxation, but also for exercise. Try these active ways for your child to discover nature.

Spot wildlife. Together, follow animal tracks around your neighborhood, on a nature trail, or through the woods. Or walk along streams or ponds looking for signs of wildlife (nests, dams, chewed leaves).

Idea: Suggest that your youngster move like the animals he sees or thinks might have been there. He could scamper like a

squirrel, "fly" like a bird, or slither like a snake.

Hold a scavenger hunt. Decide on a theme, and list objects to find. For a rock hunt, your youngster might gather rocks that are flat, striped, or smooth.

Or have a beach hunt where you look for seashells of different colors, seaweed, or driftwood. You could work in pairs or teams—just make sure the list will keep your child walking for a while! *Note:* This is a fun idea for a summer birthday party. ●



OUR PURPOSE

To provide busy parents with practical ways to promote healthy nutrition and physical activity for their children.

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