

Nutrition Nuggets

Food and Fitness for a Healthy Child

December 2008



BEST BITES

Five ingredients

When you're grocery shopping, teach your child to count to five. Five ingredients, that is! Show him where to find ingredient lists (under the nutrition panel on a can or package). Then, encourage him to look for foods with five or fewer ingredients—they're less apt to contain preservatives or other additives.

Winter sports

Take advantage of the season to try a new activity. Your youngster might play ice hockey at a community rink or join an indoor basketball league. If you live in a snowy area, rent showshoes or cross-country skis and take a family excursion.



DID YOU KNOW?

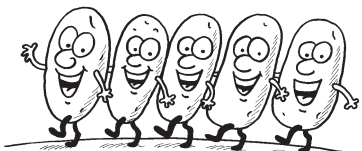
Using food to reward good behavior can backfire—children learn to eat to feel good about themselves. Plus, giving sweets as treats can make those foods seem more valuable. Try non-food incentives instead, such as an extra bedtime story or time alone with you.



Just for fun

Q: How do you divide 20 potatoes among 6 people?

A: Mash them!

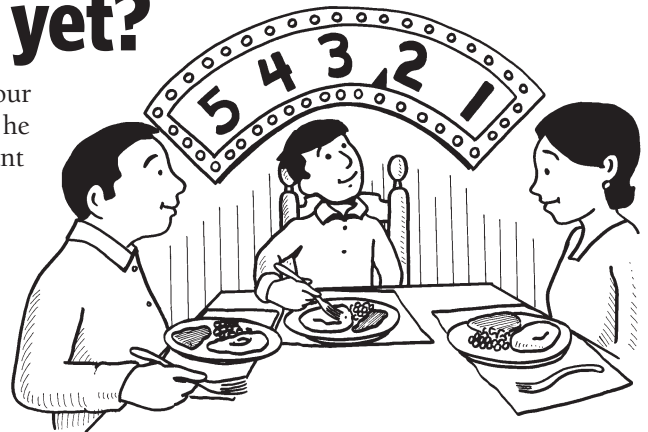


Medford Township Public Schools Tips for Healthy Eating

Am I full yet?

You've probably told your youngster to think before he speaks. But you might want to suggest that he think before he eats, too.

Thinking about what he's eating—what's called *mindful eating*—will help your child eat more healthfully. Consider these ideas.



1. Set priorities. Make meals a time to focus on eating. Sit at the kitchen or dining room table, and keep the television off. Also, avoid snacking while watching TV, using the computer, or playing video games.

2. Pay attention. Help your youngster notice and appreciate his food. You might talk about the colors, the texture, and the taste. *Example:* "These strawberries are such a pretty shade of red!" Discuss whether a food is smooth (yogurt) or crunchy (crackers), and ask him to describe the taste (sweet, salty).

3. Take your time. Encourage your child to stop between bites. Have him ask himself, "Am I still hungry? Am I full now?" *Tip:* Suggest a scale of hunger, say 1–5. Ask him how hungry he is at the start of a meal (4), in the middle (2), and at the end (1).

4. Save some for later. Let your youngster know he doesn't have to finish everything on his plate. At home or out, leftovers can be put away for another meal or a snack. Since restaurant portions are typically oversized, consider having part of your meal wrapped up before you even start. ♥

Stretch time

Stretching before and after sports or active play will help keep your child flexible and injury free. Have her warm up by jogging in place and then doing 10–15 minutes of stretches like these:

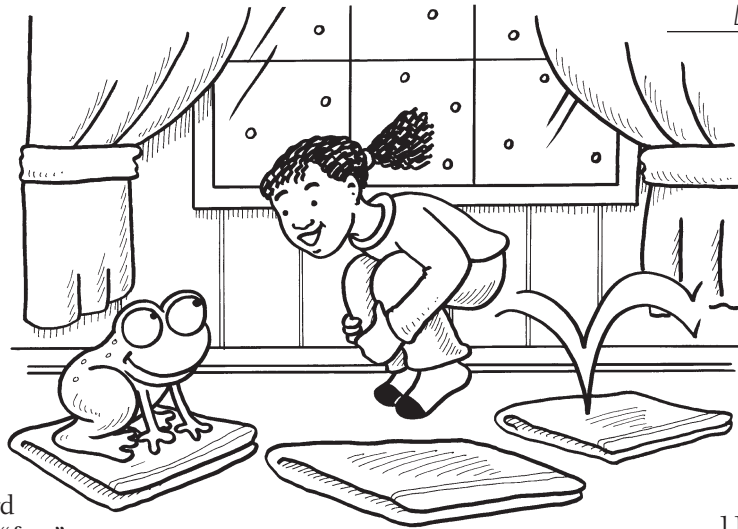
- Stand facing a wall. With your right hand against the wall, bend your left knee behind you, grab your foot with your left hand, and pull your knee up as far as you can. Switch legs.
- Hold your right elbow with your left hand, and pull your right arm up over your left shoulder. Repeat on the other side.
- Do windmills. Touch your right foot with your left hand while raising your right arm high in the air. Alternate sides.
- Sit cross-legged on the floor, and slide your knees out until your feet are touching. Lean forward and bring your nose toward your toes. ♥



Active indoors

Most youngsters love to play outside. But when the weather doesn't cooperate, just move the fun inside. Show your child how to have a good time—and stay fit—with these indoor activities.

Leap around. Fold towels in half, and place them around a carpeted room. Let your youngster pretend she's a frog and jump from "lily pad" to "lily pad." Add large cardboard boxes (with the ends cut off) for your "frog" to climb through between her leaps.



Play volleyball.

Blow up a few balloons, and make a "net" with masking tape on the floor. Players stand on opposite sides of the net and bat a balloon back and forth. If it hits the ground, the other side scores a point.

The first player to reach 11 points wins.

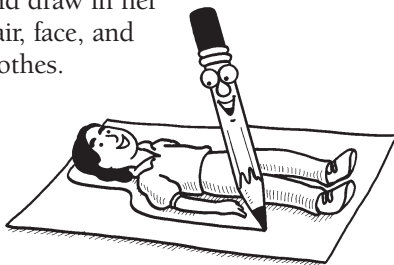
"Swim" in. Make a ball pit by filling a wading pool with small, lightweight plastic balls from the dollar store. Your child can "swim" through the balls, bury her feet or hands in balls, and toss the balls up and catch them. ♥

ACTIVITY CORNER

Healthy me

Here's a way to give your child a creative reminder of ways she can stay healthy.

Put a large sheet of newsprint or several poster boards taped together on the floor. Have your youngster lie on top, and trace around her body with a marker. She can carefully cut around the outline and draw in her hair, face, and clothes.



Then, brainstorm ways for your child to keep her body healthy. *Examples:* "Use my legs to run and exercise." "Drink milk to keep my bones strong."

Let her write the sentences on construction paper or type them on the computer in fun fonts and print them out. Finally, your youngster can glue the ideas onto the correct part of her "body." Hang up her cutout for a regular reminder of healthy habits. ♥

IN THE KITCHEN

Build your own snacks

Let your child create his own snack mixes by turning your kitchen table into a do-it-yourself snack-mix bar. Set out a variety of healthy foods, along with zipper bags to pack the snack mixes in.

You might include:

- whole-grain cereals
- raisins and other dried fruits like apricots, cranberries, and cherries
- different kinds of unsalted nuts (peanuts, cashews, almonds)
- popcorn
- mini unsalted pretzels or pretzel sticks
- rice cakes, granola bars, cereal bars, or pita chips (broken into pieces)

- banana chips
- unsalted sunflower and pumpkin seeds
- mini marshmallows



Get your youngster started with a few ideas for combinations. *Examples:* cereal, sunflower seeds, and chopped, dried apricots; pretzels, banana chips, dried cherries, and cashews.

Note: These mixes make good take-along snacks for school, games, or errands. ♥

Q & A Shopping on a budget

Q: I want my family to eat healthier foods, but it seems like fast food and soda are sometimes cheaper. How can I buy nutritious food on a budget?

A: Don't worry—there are plenty of ways to shop healthy.

Start with a plan: have a list of items you need, and gather coupons for healthy foods. Shop after a meal, and you'll be less likely to buy junk food on impulse. And compare several stores to find the best prices.

Buy in bulk whenever you can. For instance, purchase "family packs" of chicken pieces or pork chops. When you get home, you can freeze them in smaller portions. Also, get fruits such as apples and oranges or vegetables like onions and potatoes in bags rather than by the piece.

Finally, avoid buying bottled water, energy drinks, or high-priced fruit drinks. Your family can drink tap water instead—add a squirt of lemon, orange, or lime juice for flavor. ♥



OUR PURPOSE

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

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