

Nutrition Nuggets

Food and Fitness for a Healthy Child

October 2007

Medford Township Public Schools
Tips for Healthy Eating

BEST BITES

On the table

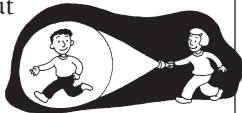
“Hi, Mom! I’m starving!”

Try to have healthy food waiting when your kids come home from school or activities, and you’ll keep them from reaching for sugary treats. Before going to work, get a few things ready. *Ideas:* Cut oranges into wedges. Roll lean turkey or roast beef slices around string cheese. Refrigerate for later.



Night games

It may be getting dark earlier, but you can still get in some active family time after dinner. Use flashlights for a game of tag. Or play “moon-ball”—a game of catch with a glow-in-the-dark ball (buy one at the dollar store, or put glow-in-the-dark stickers on a regular ball).



DID YOU KNOW?

Many grocery stores offer nutrition tours to teach children about healthy choices in each aisle. Maybe your child’s teacher would consider a field trip. You could offer to arrange or chaperone the outing if you have the time.

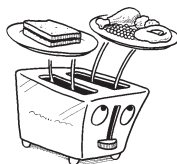


Or check with your grocer about a tour for your family.

Just for fun

Q: What are two things you can’t have for breakfast?

A: Lunch and dinner!

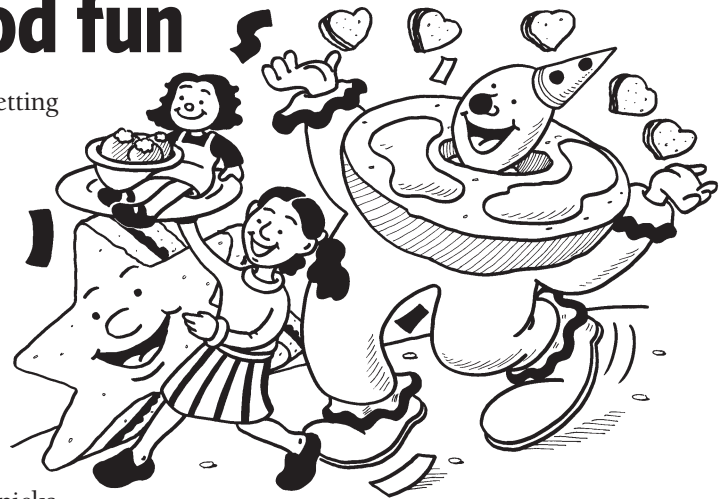


Make food fun

Do you have trouble getting your child to eat healthy food? Be a little playful, and you’re sure to see more smiles—and more nutritious food being eaten. Consider these kid-friendly tips.

Little dippers. Children often think food tastes better if they can dip it. Let your youngster spear melon chunks with toothpicks and dunk them into fat-free vanilla yogurt. Or make a simple fondue: Melt cheddar and Swiss cheese in the microwave, and put out dippers like apple wedges, cauliflower pieces, and whole-wheat pretzel rods.

Shapes and games. Make your child’s day by putting a heart on her plate. You can use cookie cutters to change sandwiches into stars, hearts, or other shapes. Turn breakfast into a game by cutting a whole-wheat waffle into four odd-shaped pieces. Have your youngster put the puzzle together before eating it.



A work of art. Let your child design her own healthy meal, and she’ll be more likely to eat it. For “bagel animals,” she can spread low-fat cream cheese on a small bagel and then use her imagination for the rest. Maybe she’ll add a hard-boiled egg for the head, carrot sticks for legs, olives for paws, and shredded lettuce for fur.

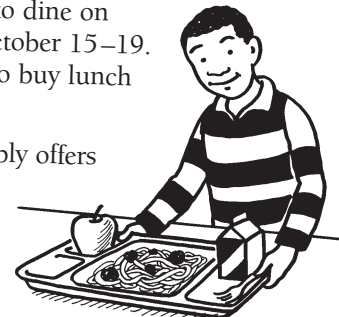
Bite-size. Serve food fit for a doll (or your little one’s mouth). You can make itty-bitty sandwiches out of lean ham and mini crackers. Scoop out cherry tomatoes, and fill with tuna, egg, or chicken salad (made with low-fat mayonnaise). Your youngster will get a kick out of these tiny treats. ♥

Eat school lunch

Join in the celebration! Encourage your youngster to dine on cafeteria food during National School Lunch Week October 15–19.

He may find the meal so delicious that he’ll want to buy lunch every day. Share these reminders with your child:

- Drink your favorite fat-free milk. Your school probably offers several kinds (plain, chocolate, strawberry).
- Choose a main course, fruit, and a vegetable. *Tip:* Ask your child what colors he ate at lunch—bright colors will most likely come from produce.
- Eat the healthy food you put on your plate. If you throw it out, it’s not healthy anymore! ♥



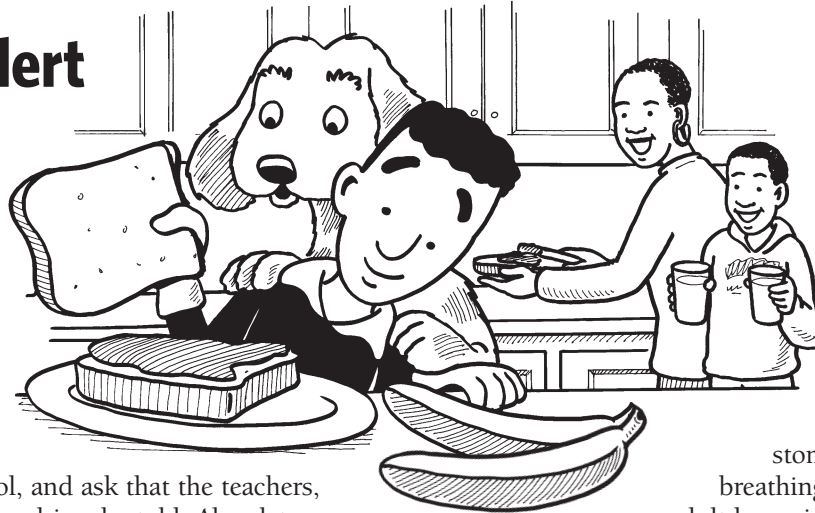
Food allergy alert

“What’s in that sandwich? I have to make sure it’s okay for me to eat.”

Teach your food-allergic child to ask simple questions, and you’ll give him the skills he needs to stay well. Here are strategies to use if your youngster is allergic to milk, wheat, peanuts, or any other food.

Tell everyone. Notify the school, and ask that the teachers, cafeteria manager, nurse, and bus driver be told. Also, let coaches, friends’ parents, and activity leaders know.

Read labels. Teach your youngster to read every food label. Ask your doctor for a list of products to avoid. For example,



if your child’s allergic to milk, he has to look out for terms like lactose, casein, and whey powder.

Know what to do. Make sure your youngster knows the symptoms of a reaction (rash, vom-

iting, swollen tongue, stomachache, trouble

breathing). He should let an adult know immediately if any of these things happen.

Know what not to do. Your child shouldn’t share friends’ lunches or trade food with anyone. He also shouldn’t eat any food without knowing the ingredients. ♥



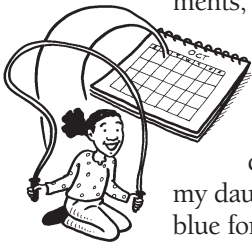
PARENT TO PARENT

Put exercise on the calendar

My family is so busy. There never seems to be enough time in the day for physical activity. Recently, I came up with an idea: make exercise part of our schedule!

Just like writing down school events, Cub Scout meetings, and dentist appointments, I needed to write in physical activity time, too. I’ve always color-coded our kitchen calendar: a purple pen for my daughter’s activities, blue for my son’s, and black for mine. So with a new green pen, I wrote “Exercise, 5–5:30” on every day of the month.

Sometimes we go outside to jog or roller-skate. Other days we jump rope and do sit-ups inside. But no matter what, I know we won’t forget to exercise—because our calendar reminds us daily! ♥



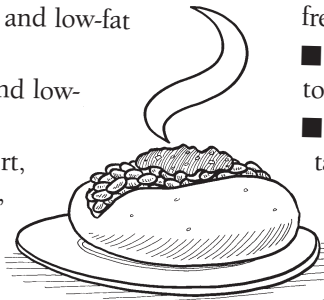
IN THE KITCHEN

Potato toppers

Serve your child a baked potato, and she’ll get a healthy dose of potassium, vitamin C, and iron. Add these toppings, and she’ll get more vitamins—and more flavor.

Start by rinsing, but not drying, a baking potato (a long-shaped variety such as russet or Yukon). Pierce it a few times with a fork, and microwave for 5 to 7 minutes, or until cooked through. Split open and top with:

- canned black beans and salsa
- steamed broccoli and low-fat cheddar cheese
- scrambled eggs and low-sodium ketchup
- plain nonfat yogurt, chopped cucumbers, and dill (fresh or dried)
- chili, chopped onions, and fat-free sour cream
- baked beans and chopped tomatoes
- last night’s leftovers (beef stew, taco meat, shredded chicken, cooked vegetables)
- tomato sauce and skim mozzarella cheese ♥



ACTIVITY CORNER

Obstacle courses

Up, over, around, and through. What could be more fun for a kid than making his way through an obstacle course? Try these ideas:

1. At a park, play follow the leader. Walk over a fallen tree trunk, dart around trees, climb up a hill, and jump over small rocks. Or go up and down the slide, cross the monkey bars, and climb around other playground equipment.



2. In the backyard, arrange lawn chairs, small

tables, and upside-down buckets. Dribble a basketball or kick a soccer ball around the obstacles.

3. Use household items to make an obstacle course in your basement or family room. Put out hula hoops, laundry baskets, and large cardboard boxes with the ends cut off for youngsters to jump over and climb through.

For an extra challenge, have your child do the course backward, or time him. With each turn, he’ll get more exercise and boost his coordination skills. ♥

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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