

Nutrition Nuggets

Food and Fitness for a Healthy Child

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BEST BITES

Dinner table ABCs

Start a mealtime game by asking your youngster to name a healthy food. Then, go around the table taking turns, with each person naming a food that begins with the last letter of the previous food. *Examples:* okra, apricot, trurkey, yellow squash. Your family may get new ideas for nutritious foods to eat.

Banana "sushi"

Here's a healthy snack or dessert your child will enjoy making and eating. Let him microwave a whole-wheat tortilla for 15 seconds and spread nut or seed butter on it. Now he can peel a banana and roll it up in the tortilla. Help him cut it into slices—like sushi!



Follow the directions

Help your youngster get fit and practice following multi-step directions. Call out two movements for her to do: "Spin around. Jump up high." Now let her give you two instructions. For the next round, say three actions. How many movements can you each remember?

Just for fun

Q: Why are teddy bears never hungry?

A: They're always stuffed!



Set healthy goals

Work together to set New Year's resolutions that will help your child make healthy choices in 2021—and beyond! Consider these possibilities.

Resolution: Eat 5–9 servings of fruits and vegetables every day.

If your youngster has three meals and two snacks that include produce, she's got this resolution covered for the day. Add vegetables to breakfast by making toast with tomato slices and melted low-fat cheese. And invite fruit to dinner by topping tacos with mango salsa. *Idea:* Let your child drop a marble into a jar for each fruit or vegetable she eats. She can count the marbles at the end of the day—did she make her goal?

Resolution: Take up an active hobby.

Help your youngster find an activity she enjoys. Even during the pandemic, there are plenty of safe options. She might sign up for virtual dance or yoga



classes. Or visit neighborhood courts as a family so she can play basketball, tennis, or pickleball.

Resolution: Sleep for 9–11 hours per night.

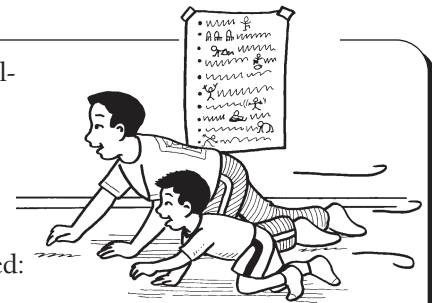
Children who get enough sleep are less likely to be overweight or obese. Aim to have your child turn off screens at least 1 hour before bedtime, since the blue light they emit can interfere with sleep. Instead, encourage her to do relaxing, screen-free activities. She could list ideas (reading, coloring, crocheting) on separate index cards and choose one after she puts on her pajamas. ♥

Family fitness challenge

Ten activities in 10 minutes? Here's a challenge that makes everyone a winner.

Let your youngster write or draw active ideas on a poster board. Do them all each day, and you'll add 70 minutes of physical activity to your child's—and your—week. These suggestions can get your family started:

- Hop on one foot for 1 minute.
- Line up kitchen chairs in a row. Sit down and get up three times on each of them.
- Crawl on hands and knees across the room. Skip back.
- Move arms in big circles 10 times. Switch direction, and do 10 more circles.
- Put pillows on the floor. Take off your shoes, and jump from one to another. ♥



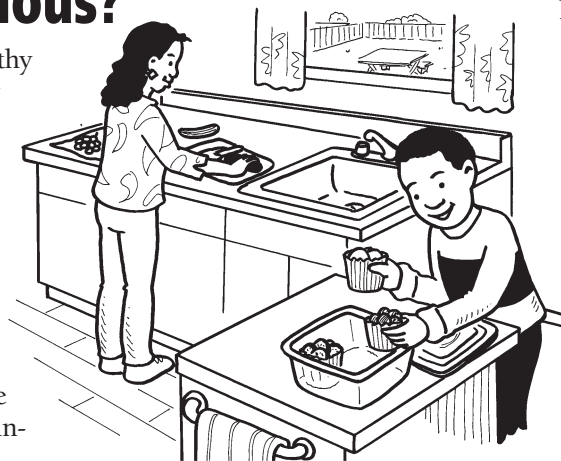
Is this food nutritious?

Some popular “kid” foods sound healthy even though they’re not. Here are a few examples, along with nutritious alternatives for your youngster. (Bonus: They’ll even save you money!)

Pre-made snack boxes

Why not? Typical ingredients include salty, processed meats like ham or salami, low-fiber white crackers, and full-fat cheese.

Healthy swap: Help your child make sectioned snack boxes using cupcake liners. He might include foods like diced



leftover baked chicken, cucumber slices, hard-boiled eggs, and grapes.

Fruit snacks

Why not? Some contain only trace amounts of actual fruit. Even brands made with 100 percent fruit juice typically contain a lot of sugar.

Healthy swap: Have your youngster eat an orange or apple, or look for dried fruit with no added sugar.

Veggie straws or chips

Why not? These are often loaded with salt, fat, and preservatives.

Healthy swap: Your child can still enjoy a crunchy snack by dipping raw vegetables like green beans and snap peas into hummus. ♥

PARENT TO PARENT

Get enough good fats

My son Andy recently discovered guacamole, and he’d eat it every day if he could. Because I knew avocados were high in fat, I tried to rein in his guac habit—until I mentioned it at his recent checkup. The doctor said avocados actually contain unsaturated fat that’s good for the heart.

Since then, we’ve been eating other sources of “good” fats that his doctor told us about.

For instance, I’m cooking with olive oil instead of butter and tossing salads with olive oil

and balsamic vinaigrette rather than ranch dressing. We’re also eating fish like tuna and salmon twice a week.

Andy is happy he gets to eat guacamole more often. And I’ve discovered he loves avocado slices on his sandwiches—the creaminess makes them a perfect heart-healthy substitute for mayonnaise. ♥

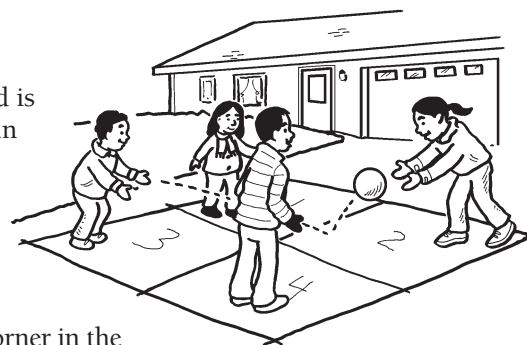


ACTIVITY CORNER

PE at home

Whether your child is learning in person or remotely, she can enjoy PE every day. Add more movement to her days with these ideas:

- Let your youngster pretend she’s the PE teacher and show you exercises or games she does in class.
- Suggest that your child create a PE corner in the living room with equipment like a yoga mat to stretch out on and beanbags to juggle.
- Play classic PE games. Your youngster might use sidewalk chalk to draw a four-square court on the sidewalk.
- If your child has PE homework, offer to do it alongside her. ♥



IN THE KITCHEN

All right, burger night!

Lean and tasty, these two dishes will liven up your family’s next burger night.

Chicken and zucchini. In a large bowl, combine 1 lb. lean ground chicken with 1 beaten egg, 1 shredded zucchini, 1 minced garlic clove, $\frac{1}{2}$ cup whole-wheat breadcrumbs, and $\frac{1}{4}$ tsp. each salt and pepper. Divide into 4 patties, and sauté in an oiled skillet over medium-high heat until cooked through, about 3 minutes per side. Serve on whole-wheat buns with lettuce and tomato.

Quinoa and feta. Preheat oven to 400°. Beat 3 eggs in a large bowl. Stir in 2 cups cooked quinoa, 1 tbsp. tomato paste, $\frac{1}{2}$ cup whole-wheat panko breadcrumbs, $\frac{1}{4}$ cup crumbled feta cheese, 2 tbsp. parsley, and $\frac{1}{2}$ tsp. salt. Arrange 4 patties on a lightly greased baking sheet and cook 20 minutes, flipping halfway through. Tuck into whole-wheat pita pockets with baby spinach and nonfat Greek yogurt. ♥



OUR PURPOSE

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

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