

Nutrition Nuggets™

Food and Fitness for a Healthy Child

April 2015



Crescent Elementary School
Kelly Varner, RN

BEST BITES

Flavorful add-ons

Use salsa and mustard to add pizzazz to sandwiches, burgers, salads, and baked potatoes—without the sugar or fat of ketchup, mayonnaise, sour cream, or salad dressing. You can spice things up with interesting salsas, such as mango, roasted chipotle, and olive-artichoke. Or try different mustard flavors like horseradish, cranberry, or walnut.

Learning to ride a bike

Spring is a good time for taking off the training wheels. Try this method: Run alongside your child, gently holding her shoulder as she pedals and steers. Eventually, she'll feel more comfortable and steady, and you can begin to let go so she can balance on her own. *Note:* Be sure to tell her before letting go.



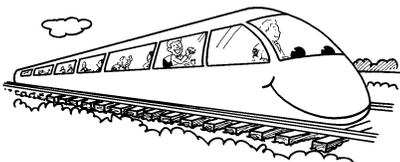
DID YOU KNOW?

If your youngster is thirsty, he's already a little bit dehydrated. The best way to stave off dehydration is to drink water throughout the day. Get him a refillable water bottle, and encourage him to keep it with him. He could take it to school and activities in a backpack and put it on his desk at homework time.

Just for fun

Q: What do you call a meal that you eat on a high-speed train?

A: Fast food!



Around the dinner table

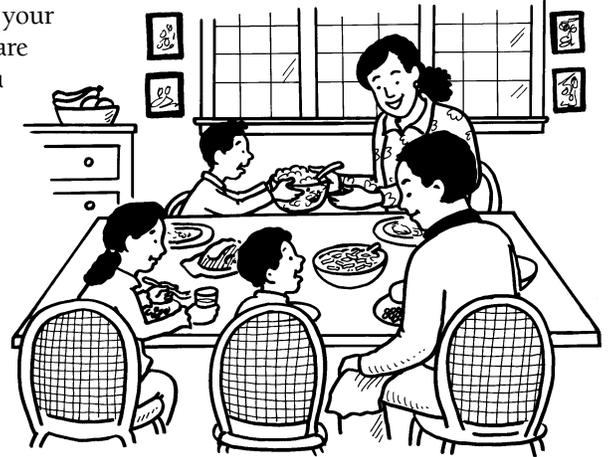
Family meals give you and your children an opportunity to share more than healthy food—you also get to share each other's lives. Build a tradition of eating together with strategies like these.

Make it a priority

Set a goal for the number of family meals you'll have each week. You might start by deciding on three dinners, for instance, and gradually work up to five, six, or even seven. *Hint:* To make this work, be flexible with the time and place. For instance, have a picnic at the baseball or soccer field after your child's practice or game. Or adjust dinnertime based on activity and work schedules, making it at 5:30 one evening and 7:30 another.

Work out a plan

Think about the best day to shop for groceries. Consider which nights require the quickest prep. Find pockets of time for chopping onions or making a casserole in advance. Then, write out a plan, and do



your best to follow it. Involve everyone in the planning—and the doing—to make things go more smoothly.

Keep it simple

No one ever said nightly meals have to be gourmet events. Perhaps pick one night a week to have the same menu, such as Turkey Burger Tuesdays or Fajita Fridays. Keep ingredients on hand for a go-to meal like rice bowls or soup. Or work around a purchased item: Get a rotisserie chicken, for example, and steam green beans or bake potatoes in the microwave to go with it. 🍷

Food poetry

Encourage your youngster to think about healthy eating by writing haiku poetry as a family.

Haiku, a traditional form of Japanese poetry, has three lines: 5 syllables, 7 syllables, 5 syllables. Each person could secretly pick a nutritious food and write a haiku about it. Read your poems aloud—and guess the foods described.



Example:

Sliced in a sandwich
Made into guacamole
Smooth and silky. Yum!
(Answer: Avocado)

Then, try to serve the foods from the poems in the coming weeks. Your child might illustrate the poems and display each one when you eat the food. 🍷

Plant it...eat it

When children have a hand in planting and harvesting food, they are much more likely to eat the healthy results. Try these tips:

- Give your child her own space for gardening, whether in pots, raised beds, or the ground.
- Help her research what to plant. She could read seed packets, consult library books and websites, or talk to folks at a garden center. She'll probably enjoy crops that grow quickly, such as lettuce, radishes, snap peas, tomatoes, carrots, potatoes, bok choy, and summer squash.



- Suggest that she think about a "specialty" garden. For instance, she might plant a garden with vegetables to top a pizza or design a garden plot that will turn into a rainbow as the vegetables grow.
- Let your youngster take the lead at every stage. She could pick out seeds,

plant them, and water and weed her garden. When it's time, have her harvest her crops and rinse them for eating right away or let her help cook with them. Eating the fruits and vegetables she has grown is sure to put a smile on her face (as well as healthy food in her tummy)! 🍎



PARENT TO PARENT

Sports on a budget

My son, Colin, wanted to learn how to play tennis. Fortunately, we have public courts nearby, but we couldn't afford lessons or a racquet.

I thought about solutions and came up with some that worked well. First, I emailed neighbors to see if anyone had a child-sized racquet they weren't using. A neighbor down the street said she did, and she even lent me her old racquet so I could hit balls back and forth with Colin.



Then, I worked out a bartering deal with a coworker who happens to coach tennis. Each week I make a dinner for her family, and in exchange, she gives Colin a tennis lesson. It's really not a big deal for me—I just double whatever I'm making for my family—and Colin is thrilled to be learning how to hit a forehand and a backhand! 🎾

ACTIVITY CORNER

Step right up!

Plan the "greatest show on earth" right in your backyard with these circus-themed activities.

Merry-go-round. Stretch out a round tablecloth, and ask family members or friends to grab an edge. While holding on, walk briskly, hop, or jog in a circle—the cloth will start to look like a carousel.

High wire. Lay down a strip of masking tape, or draw a line with sidewalk chalk. Or spray paint a 2" x 4" piece of lumber, and let it dry. Then, take turns walking the tightrope—maybe even juggling a few balls as you go.

Tumbling act. Decorate a hula hoop with crepe streamers. Make up tumbling routines that include doing forward rolls through the hoop.

Idea: Serve healthy circus snacks like air-popped popcorn or a "clown face"—a round pineapple or orange slice topped with shredded carrots for hair, blueberry eyes, a strawberry nose, and grapes for a mouth. 🍌



IN THE KITCHEN

Feasting on frittatas

For an easy meal any time of day, whip up a frittata. Simply saute vegetables in an ovenproof skillet, add eggs and cheese, and bake. Here are two recipes.

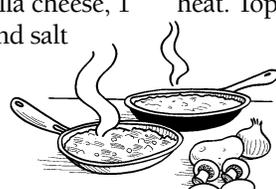
Italian

Saute 1 diced onion over medium heat for 5 minutes. Add 8-oz. sliced mushrooms and 1 sliced zucchini, and cook until the vegetables are soft. In a bowl, whisk 8 eggs, $\frac{1}{3}$ cup fat-free milk, $\frac{1}{2}$ cup grated skim mozzarella cheese, 1 tsp. oregano, 1 tsp. basil, and salt and pepper to taste. Pour the egg mixture into the skillet with the vegetables and cook (without stirring) until the eggs begin

to set, about 3 minutes. Sprinkle with another $\frac{1}{2}$ cup mozzarella, and put the skillet in a 400° oven. Bake until the eggs are set, about 15 minutes.

Corn and potato

In a bowl, beat 6 eggs with 1 cup shredded cheddar cheese. Then, in a skillet at medium heat, saute 1 diced potato, 2 sliced scallions, and $\frac{1}{4}$ tsp. thyme. When the potatoes are brown, add 2 cups canned or frozen corn, and heat. Top with the egg mixture, and cook without stirring until the bottom is set, about 8–10 minutes. Place under a broiler for about 2 minutes, until the top is golden and set. 🍳



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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