

Nutrition Nuggets

Food and Fitness for a Healthy Child

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Robertson County Elementary School
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BEST BITES

I'm full

Help your child avoid overeating by taking time to talk about the color, texture, or taste of his food. If you say, "I love the color of carrots," he may respond, "I like how crunchy they are." By stopping to think, he'll slow down his eating pace, giving him time to feel full.

Building strength

Let your youngster create her own weights using two empty quart-sized milk jugs. Help her fill them a quarter-full with sand or dry rice and screw on the cap. Suggest that she hold one in each hand as she squats, lunges, or does bicep curls. As she gets stronger, she could add sand or rice to make her weights heavier.



DID YOU KNOW?

Most children consume too much sodium. Lower your child's salt intake by offering a variety of spices and fresh herbs instead. Let him smell the basil, oregano, or ginger and sprinkle it in while you're cooking. *Idea:* Read spice jar labels together for ideas of where to use the spices. He'll learn about different flavors—and forget about the salt shaker!

Just for fun

Q: How do you fix a torn pizza?

A: With tomato paste.



Go for whole grains

Get your youngster used to eating whole grains while she's young, and you'll help her build a healthy habit for a lifetime. Try these strategies.

Give details

Begin by explaining why whole grains are good for her. You can tell her that these grains are still "wearing their coats"—they contain the entire grain kernel with all its fiber, vitamins, and minerals. Processed grains like white bread have the outer layer removed, so they've "lost their jackets"—where the important nutrients are.

Make it gradual

Help your youngster adjust to whole grains by working them in gradually. For instance, make both white and brown rice, and mix them together. Or prepare regular and whole-grain pasta, and toss them in a bowl with sauce. As she becomes accustomed to the taste, build up to three-quarters whole grains and then eventually to all whole grains.

Use daily

Try adding whole grains to foods your child regularly eats. You can stir oats into lean ground beef when you're fixing hamburgers. Or put barley or bulgur wheat in soups and casseroles. When shopping, go for the whole-grain varieties of bagels and tortillas.

Note: Many chronic conditions that develop later in life might be avoided by eating more whole grains. The fiber and other natural compounds may reduce the risk of diabetes, heart disease, and some cancers. ●



Get your winter wiggles out

Winter's chill might still be lingering, but your youngster can burn off pent-up energy—and get physical activity—with these indoor ideas.

● **"Drive" around the house.** Let your child use a kitchen pot lid as a pretend steering wheel. He could pick up speed by marching down the hallway or slow down as he maneuvers around furniture.

● **Follow the path.** Have your youngster make a color trail with different-colored socks (or pieces of construction paper). Then, take turns saying a color, and everyone has to walk down the path, stepping only on that color. *Variation:* Step on any color except the one called out. ●

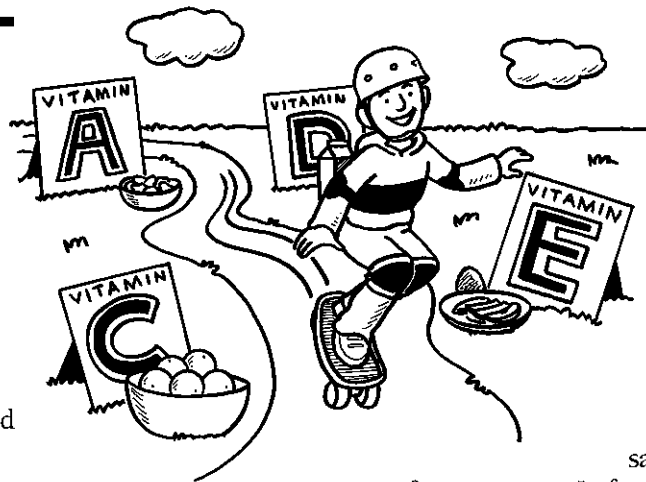


O&A Healthy after-school snacks

Q: I'm concerned that my son snacks too much after school. How should I handle this?

A: Most children are hungry when they get home from school—it's a long time since lunch and a few hours until dinner. So think of your son's snack as a bridge between meals.

The important thing is to make sure the snacks he eats are healthy ones. This is a good time to get in nutrients he may be short on,



like vitamins A (dried apricots), C (oranges), D (fortified milk), and E (avocado), plus minerals like calcium (bok choy) and magnesium (garbanzo beans).

The best options are often smaller portions of foods you would normally eat at mealtime, such as turkey sausage tucked into a mini

pita or a cup of tomato soup. In fact, try to avoid foods typically sold as snacks, like cookies, cakes, crackers, chips, and fruit drinks. They're loaded with sugar and empty calories that will give him only a short burst of energy—and won't satisfy his hunger for the long term. ♥

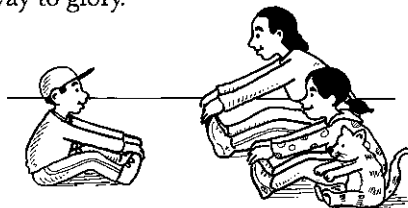
ACTIVITY CORNER

Stage a performance

Encourage your youngster to put on a live show that highlights fitness. No props required! Suggest these three themes.

1. Imagine the action. Your little actor may decide to be an action hero who saves the planet from aliens. What leaps and bounds will he use to rescue small children and animals?

2. Set up for sports. Maybe your child will reenact a scene from his favorite sports movie. He might act out a character hitting the ball and running around the bases or be a track star hurdling his way to glory.



3. "If I were a teacher..." Ask your youngster to pretend he's the PE teacher at school. He could demonstrate games or exercises he will teach the kids—and then lead you in a "class." ♥

IN THE KITCHEN

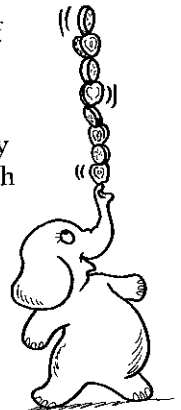
Inspired by Dr. Seuss...

March 2 is Dr. Seuss's birthday. Celebrate his gift of rhyme with some cooking time!

Cat-in-the-Hat fruit snacks. Your child can make the cat's hat by alternating strawberry halves and banana slices on a plate. To enjoy her snack, she could dip the fruit into Greek yogurt sweetened with a little honey.

Green Eggs and Ham. Heat 1 tsp. olive oil in a skillet. Add 5 oz. (about 3 cups) fresh spinach leaves, and cook until wilted, about 1 minute. Pour in 2 whisked eggs, and stir until they're set. The spinach turns them green! Serve with lean ham slices.

Who hash. In honor of the tiny Whoville-ians in *Horton Hears a Who*, dice potatoes, carrots, and radishes. In a skillet, heat 2 tbsp. olive oil, and saute 4 cups of the vegetables until tender. Add 2 cups shredded leftover pot roast or chicken. Heat through. ♥



Savvy food shopping

Serving healthier food to your family and saving money can go hand in hand. Here's how:

- To cut down on impulse purchases, make a shopping list, and stick to it. Also, don't shop when you or your children are hungry. *Tip:* Enjoy a healthy meal or snack together before heading to the store.
- Consider less-expensive sources of protein. Eggs, beans, and tofu usually cost less than meat or fish.



- Buy in bulk for family staples. For instance, get family packs of chicken, and freeze meal-size portions. Or purchase rice, cereal, and other grains in bulk, and store in airtight containers.
- Avoid packaged cookies, bakery items, processed foods, and frozen treats. They're not only high in fat and low in nutrients, they're also pricey. ♥

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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