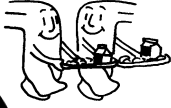


# Nutrition Nuggets

Food and Fitness for a Healthy Child

September 2014



## BEST BITES

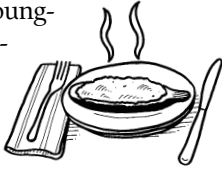
### Veggie "pizza boats"

Put more vegetables into your young-

ster's diet by turning them into "pizza boats."

Slice a zucchini or yellow squash in half lengthwise, and microwave until tender (2–4 minutes).

Then, top each half with tomato sauce, shredded skim mozzarella cheese, and sliced mushrooms. Microwave or broil until the cheese melts.



### Kick it

Help your child get a "kick" out of exercising with this core-strengthening activity. Lie on your backs (heads and shoulders off the ground), and take turns calling out kicks to do. For "scissors," move your legs up and down while crisscrossing them back and forth. For "flutter," lift both legs, and then alternate raising and lowering them.

### Cut portions down to size

Do your children eat larger portions of meat than they should? Try this chef's trick. Cut meat or chicken into 3-oz. servings (the size of a deck of cards), and thinly slice. Then, fan the slices on each person's plate. The smaller amount will fill the plate—and your youngsters will think their food looks "prettier"!

### Just for fun

**Q:** What animal makes the most of its food?

**A:** A giraffe—it goes a long way!



## Healthy learners

There are no two ways about it: When children have healthy habits, they go to school more ready to learn. Use these ideas to help your youngster thrive in the classroom.

### Eat breakfast

Breakfast-eaters score higher on tests and have better grades, behavior, and attendance. Make breakfast a daily habit by building it into your child's schedule. *Tip:* Consider having her eat breakfast at school. That way, the meal can be part of a relaxed routine at school rather than a morning rush for you.

### Stay active

Did you know that after just 20 minutes of exercise, brain activity improves? Encourage your youngster to run, jump, and move around after school—her body and brain will stay more active! In fact, see if her focus for homework improves after a game of hide-and-seek or a jump-rope session. *Idea:* Help her keep track of



times that she is active. Ask how many 20-minute periods she tallies each day.

### Get enough sleep

If your child is tired, she won't be able to pay attention, absorb information, or learn as much. Try making it fun to go to bed on time with nightly rituals like reading to each other or playing a quiet game. *Note:* Set a bedtime that gives her 9–11 hours of sleep. If she wakes up around the same time each morning without needing an alarm, she's getting the right amount of shut-eye. ●

## Joining a team

As the new school year starts, you might be wondering if your child is ready for a team sport. These questions can help you decide.

● **Behavior.** Does your youngster follow directions? Will he share and take turns nicely? When he plays games, does he manage losing well? If the answers are yes, he may be ready.

● **Interests.** Has your child told you he wants to play on a team? If you bring it up, does he seem enthusiastic? Let his interest level be your guide. After all, he's the one who has to commit to attending practices and games.

Remember, children develop at different rates and have different interests. If you wait until he's ready, he's more likely to enjoy team sports and get the physical activity that goes along with them. ●

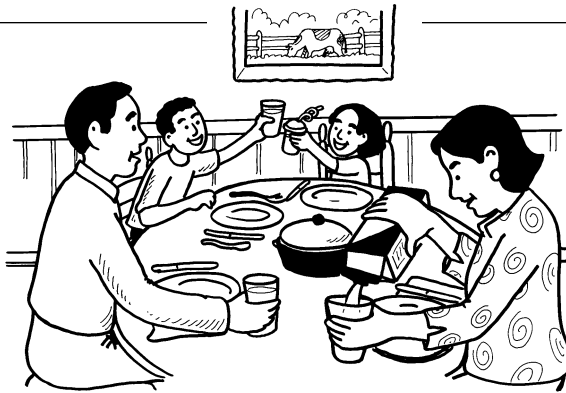


# Got (enough) milk?

It's a fact that most kids don't get enough calcium. And what's the single best source of calcium for a child? Milk! In addition, milk provides vitamin D and protein—other important nutrients for your youngster.

Try these strategies for getting your child to drink 2–3 cups of fat-free milk a day:

- Make milk or water the only choices at meals.
- Serve milk ice-cold.

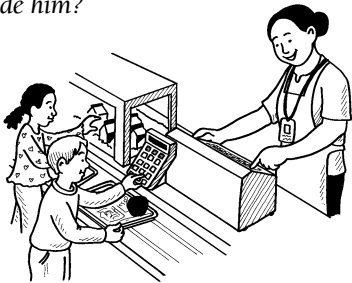


- Put milk in fun glasses or mugs. Use striped, colorful, or bendable straws. *Idea:* Give your youngster a straw to drink up the milk left in his cereal bowl.
- Let him see you drinking milk yourself.
- Use milk in foods that your child eats, such as oatmeal or tomato soup.

*Note:* If your youngster has milk allergies or is lactose intolerant, get calcium-fortified almond, soy, rice, or lactose-free milk. ♥

## Q&A The cafeteria experience

**Q:** I'd like my son to buy school lunch each day, but he doesn't want to. How can I persuade him?



**A:** You could start by telling him about fun parts like going through the cafeteria line with his friends and picking out his own meals. He might also get to punch in his PIN number or scan a meal card, depending on his school's payment system. Plus, you can mention that he'll get to know the nice people who work in the cafeteria—and they'll get to know him, too.

Then, get your son interested in the food by reading the next day's menu together each evening. He could highlight his choices with his favorite color. Finally, when he gets home, ask positive questions like, "What was the best part of your lunch?" or "What kind of fruit did you eat?" ♥

### 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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## ACTIVITY CORNER

### Start a "Fit Club"

Children love to be in clubs. Whether it's a cousins club, a neighborhood club, or a pony-lovers club, groups give kids a comforting sense of belonging. To help your youngster stay active, why not encourage her to start a fitness club? Here's how.

**1. Invite friends to join.** She might ask the kids on your street or the other third-graders on her bus, for instance.

**2. Hold an organizational meeting.** Help the youngsters figure out where they'll meet and how often. They could alternate houses or go to a local park, based on when parents can supervise. Suggest that they name their club, too ("The Elmwood Street Exercisers").

**3. Draw up a list of activities.** The only rule? They have to be *active* activities! *Examples:* Basketball, backyard games, dancing, climbing on playground equipment. Then, let them get started—and get moving! ♥



## IN THE KITCHEN

### Boost your smoothies

Combine all kinds of healthy goodness—fruit, vegetables, yogurt, milk—into one glass of deliciousness with these smoothie recipes. (*Note:* Smoothies work best with frozen fruit. You could freeze fresh fruit or buy frozen fruit.)

#### Berry good

1 cup blueberries, 1 cup cherries, ½ cup strawberries, 1 cup 100% grape or apple juice, and 2 tbsp. nonfat vanilla Greek yogurt

#### Banana split

1 banana, 2 cups strawberries, 1 cup fat-free milk, and ¾ cup nonfat plain Greek yogurt



#### Green pineapple

2 cups spinach leaves, 1½ cups almond milk, ½ cup coconut water, 3 cups pineapple chunks, and 2 tbsp. unsweetened coconut flakes

Add to the fun *and* the nutrition with these pointers:

- Let your child make the smoothie herself. She can put the ingredients into a blender, hold down the top with one hand, and push "on" with the other. Have her blend until the ingredients are combined.
- Mix 1 tsp. flaxseeds, wheat germ, or protein powder into any smoothie. ♥

# Nutrition Nuggets

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October 2014



## BEST BITES

### Take a farm tour

It's a great time of year for showing your youngster where her food comes from. At pick-your-own orchards and farms, she could pluck apples and pears from trees or pumpkins from vines. Or take a farm tour to watch cows being milked and learn about crops and other farm animals. Look online or in community newspapers for details.



## DID YOU KNOW?

Sweet potatoes are a rich source of potassium, fiber, and beta-carotene. Bake sweet potatoes (about an hour at 375°) for a side dish that's so naturally sweet your child won't need to add butter. Or slice potatoes thickly, drizzle with a little olive oil, and roast at 400° for 30–45 minutes. *Tip:* Heat the pan first for crispier fries.

### Healthier parties

Birthday parties are a highlight for most children—especially if it's theirs! But when parties add up, so do the cupcakes and ice cream. Consider making your youngster's party a healthier one with a physical activity like gymnastics or relay races and a fun fruit treat (apple slices to dunk in honey, strawberries to dip in melted dark chocolate).

### Just for fun

**Q:** What smells the best at dinner?

**A:** Your nose!



## Skip the empty calories

It seems unbelievable, but research shows that almost 40 percent of the calories children consume are “empty” ones. Try limiting these empty calories, and you'll go a long way toward helping your child maintain a healthy weight and feel his best.

### What are they?

Empty calories come from added sugar or solid fat and have no nutrients.

### What's the problem?

They fill your youngster up without providing the vitamins and minerals he needs.

### Where are they?

The most likely culprits are soda, fruit drinks, candy, cake, cookies, and doughnuts. But you also have to watch for empty calories in foods that do have important nutrients. Whole milk, pizza, fried chicken, and cheese all have solid fats; and jelly, sports drinks, and sweetened yogurt and cereals have added sugars.



### What now?

Together, brainstorm a list of replacements for empty-calorie foods. For instance, your child might choose fruit over candy, flavored seltzer water rather than soda or sports drinks, fat-free milk in place of whole milk, and frozen 100 percent fruit bars instead of ice cream.

### Try this

Help him make a poster with road signs for “stop” or “go” foods. (“Stop eating candy.” “Go for grapes!”) Or he could put each empty-calorie food in a circle and draw a slash through it (like a Do Not Enter sign). Hang his chart in the kitchen for reference. 🍓

## Build snack baskets

Make it easy for your youngster to choose a healthy snack by putting together snack baskets like these.

**On the kitchen table.** Fill a clean bucket with mini raisin boxes, small bags of almonds or sunflower seeds, fresh fruit, and colorful sports bottles of tap water. Add a card that says, “Take water, and choose two snacks!”

**In the fridge.** Stock a colorful plastic bin with cold water bottles, individual cups of unsweetened applesauce, containers of ready-to-eat raw vegetables (green beans, cauliflower florets, carrots), and a small tub of hummus or lowfat ranch dressing. Then, put it on a shelf at your child's eye level so it's the first thing she sees when she opens the refrigerator. 🍓



# Fit as a family

Want your child to be more active? Get in on the action together! Try ideas like these, and find the one—or ones—just right for your family:

- Take regular bike rides on neighborhood paths or local bike trails. On weekends, load bikes in the car and drive to new places to ride. *Note:* Be sure to wear helmets.
- Try stand-up paddling. You could paddle together on one board or take out your own, depending on your child's age and experience. Check with your parks and recreation department or local outfitters for lessons at nearby lakes or rivers.



- Have a weekly tennis round-robin. Go to public courts, and take turns playing against each other. *Tip:* Ask relatives for racquets their kids have outgrown, or find used ones at garage sales or secondhand shops.
- Sign up for yoga classes at the community center or YMCA. Then, continue your practice at home with a nightly “yoga break.”

- Take a walk every day before or after dinner—whichever works best in your family's schedule. When it gets cold, bundle up, and keep on walking.

*Bonus:* Fitness is a fun way to spend time together and strengthen bonds. Build it into your family life now, and the habit may continue into the teenage years when your children aren't as excited about hanging out with you. ♥

## PARENT TO PARENT **Homemade kids' meals**

Week after week my daughter begged to get fast food on the way home from after-school care. I wasn't happy about having her eat fast food, and I soon realized that what she really liked best anyway was the cute packaging and the toy.



That gave me an idea. Why not create our own kids' meals at home? I had Allie decorate brown paper lunch bags. Then every Friday we make them into “Friday Fun Meals” for dinner. I just put whatever I've made for dinner into plastic containers and place them in a decorated bag for each person. Allie adds a napkin, a plastic fork, and a cup for water. For the final touch, I drop in a surprise—a small toy from the dollar store.

Allie loves our homemade kids' meals, and I'm happy we're having healthier “fast food.” ♥

## ACTIVITY CORNER **Game changers**

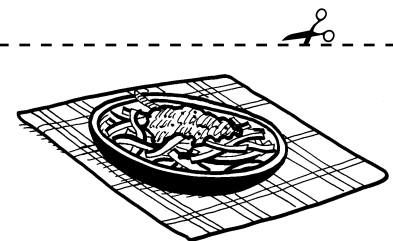
When your youngster has friends over, encourage them to be active with these two twists on classic games.



1. Try a life-size version of tic-tac-toe. Using yarn or jump ropes, the kids can make a giant tic-tac-toe board on the grass. Two players stand on the opposite side of the yard, each holding six Xs or Os (written on slips of paper). Take turns running to the grid, dropping in an X or O, and running back. First to get three in a row is the winner.
2. Play Simon Says, but each direction has to involve moving around. *Examples:* “Simon says jump up and down seven times.” “Simon says twirl around twice.” “Touch your toes.” Oops, if you touched your toes, you're out! ♥

## IN THE KITCHEN **Pasta swap**

Turn vegetables into “noodles,” and your family will get a delicious pasta experience without the carb overload. Pair any of these options with your favorite marinara sauce, meatballs, or sauteed vegetables. *Note:* Vegetable noodles are a great option for gluten-free kids.



- Use a vegetable peeler to scrape zucchini or peeled carrots into noodle-like strands. Or get a “spiral” tool—popular in stores or online—to make noodles out of almost any vegetable (yellow squash, cucumbers, beets, jicama). Use the strands raw, or pour boiling water over them to soften.

- Bake a spaghetti squash (350° for 1 hour), cut in half lengthwise, and scoop out the seeds. With a fork, scrape the flesh into strands.
- Peel an eggplant, and slice into ¼-inch strips. Salt, and let drain for a half-hour. Rinse with cold water, and pat dry with paper towels. Now slice the strips thinly.

*Tip:* Combine any of these for a “rainbow pasta.” ♥

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