

Nutrition Nuggets

Food and Fitness for a Healthy Child

September 2009

Rio Rancho Public Schools

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BEST BITES

Try new foods

Does your child want the same foods every day?

Encourage him to branch out by serving new foods along with ones he already likes. For instance, put tomato on a grilled cheese sandwich or avocado on a turkey and cheese sandwich. *Tip:* Offer only one new food at a time.

DID YOU KNOW?

Your youngster might qualify for free or reduced-price school breakfasts and lunches. Complete the simple application form your school sends home, or ask in the school office. *Note:* Cafeterias use ID systems that keep payment information private, so no one knows who pays and who gets free meals.



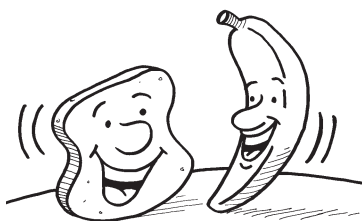
Stop and go

Help your kids get exercise and boost coordination with this fast-paced game. One person kicks a ball and calls out a body part (right foot, left arm, left knee). Players try to stop the ball using that body part. If a player doesn't follow the directions, she gets a point. Lowest score wins!

Just for fun

Q: What did the banana say to the bread?

A: Nothing. Bananas don't talk!



Start the day right

Teach your child to eat a healthy breakfast every day, and you'll help him build an important habit for life. Here are some ideas.

Why should I eat breakfast?

Start by explaining to your youngster that food gives him the energy he needs to do schoolwork and to play. Ask him, "Can we drive our car without gas in the tank?" When he says, "Of course not!" you can tell him that food is like fuel in his tank.

What should I have?

Help your child learn how to put together a healthy breakfast. Using old magazines, have him cut out pictures of foods. Then, he can glue several "meals" on separate paper plates.

Discuss his choices. Has he included a protein like eggs, milk, or yogurt? Does he have whole grains, such as oatmeal, whole-wheat toast, or whole-grain waffles? Did he add fruit?



What can I do?

Let your youngster plan breakfast menus for the week. Suggest that he write each one on an index card and keep them in a small box. Go food shopping together, and help him select healthy versions of his choices (fat-free milk, non-sugary cereals).

At night, he can pull out the next morning's card and do "prep" work. For example, he might set the table, put out cereal boxes, wash fruit, or help you make pancakes that you can reheat in the morning.

Note: Ask if your school serves breakfast. Your child can get a healthy meal and will have fun eating with his friends. ●

What's for breakfast?

Looking for easy breakfasts that your youngster will love? Try these.

Egg cup: Spray the inside of a mug with nonstick spray. Whisk two eggs with a little fat-free milk, and pour into the mug. Stir in pieces of low-fat cheese and ham. Microwave for 1½–2 minutes, until the eggs are set.

Pineapple sundae: Scoop nonfat vanilla yogurt into a clear glass. Top with pineapple chunks and mandarin oranges (canned in their own juice and drained). Sprinkle with shredded coconut.

Roll-ups: Top a whole-wheat tortilla with fillings like low-fat cream cheese and sliced cucumbers or refried beans and shredded cheddar cheese. Roll the tortilla tightly into a log, and slice it crosswise into small pieces. ●



Family circuit training

Health clubs often have “circuits,” or groups of exercise machines to use in a row. Create your own circuit at home for free, and enjoy exercising together as a family! You can set up stations like these.

Squat and reach. Hold a ball at chest level. Squat into a sitting position, stand up, and “touch the sky” with your arms. Repeat.

Step up. Stand at the bottom of a staircase, hold on to the banister, and step up with one foot. Raise your other knee up high, and step down with both feet. Alternate legs.



Open and close. Hold a soup can in each hand. With elbows at your waist and arms straight out in front, move your arms out to your sides and back to the center. Balance on one foot for an extra challenge.

Jump over. Jump from side to side over a phone book (older kids and adults) or a small box (younger children). Land with knees bent.

Have one person watch the clock and call “next station” after 30 seconds. You can add aerobic exercise by jogging in place or doing push-ups for 15 seconds between stations.

Note: For safety, be sure everyone wears sneakers. ♥

ACTIVITY CORNER

Food tokens

Encourage your youngster to eat the daily recommended number of food group servings with this fun idea.

Together, make a set of food tokens for each family member. Here’s how: cut out small cardboard circles and draw pictures for each food group (examples: cows for dairy foods or carrots for vegetables). Each person will need tokens for 9 servings of grains, 4 vegetables, 3 fruits, 3 dairy, and 2 meat and beans. *Tip:* Have everyone initial their tokens.



Each person starts the day with all his tokens. At meal or snack time, everyone puts one in a jar for each serving they ate. Can your family members use all their tokens every day? ♥

O U R P U R P O S E

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

Resources for Educators,
a division of Aspen Publishers, Inc.
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540-636-4280 • rfeustomer@wolterskluwer.com
www.rfeonline.com

Nutrition Nuggets is reviewed by a registered dietitian. Consult a physician before beginning any major change in diet or exercise.
ISSN 1935-4630

IN THE KITCHEN

Count, add, and snack

Here are two tasty ways to build a math lesson into snack time.

Dominoes. Let your child break a whole graham cracker into four pieces and spread each one with a thin layer of peanut butter (substitute cream cheese if allergic). Next, he can put raisins on top to turn the pieces into dominoes. For example, he could make a domino with 4 raisins on one half and 5 on the other. Join him in making dominoes, and take turns matching your numbers end-to-end. Then, eat them together!

Fruit countdown. Your youngster can practice counting backward by making a number-based fruit salad for your family. He might combine 10 banana slices, 9 blueberries, 8 grapes, and so on, down to 1 big strawberry on top. Have him add all the numbers (on paper or in his head) to find the total number of pieces of fruit. ♥



Q & A Ready for organized sports?

Q: T-ball and soccer leagues are forming in our community. How do I know if my child is ready for organized sports?

A: For sports, as for everything else, children develop at different rates. Some may be ready to play on teams at age 5 or 6; for others, it may be age 10 or older.

Start by considering whether your child can follow directions, share with others, and handle losing when she plays

games. If so, talk to her about whether she wants to play on a team. Is she excited about the idea, or is she indifferent? Make sure she understands the commitment—she will probably have at least a practice and a game each week.

If your youngster feels she’s ready, let her help select the sport to try. She’s more likely to stay motivated if she has a say in the decision. ♥

