

Nutrition Nuggets

Food and Fitness for a Healthy Child

November 2020

Western Arizona Council of Governments

Head Start

BEST BITES

Festive cornucopias

This Thanksgiving, let your child add healthy mini cornucopias to your holiday table. He could fill waffle cones with plain non-fat Greek yogurt and add fruit and nuts (perhaps grapes, cut-up oranges, and walnuts). He can tie a colorful ribbon around each cone—the decorations will make a perfect appetizer or dessert.



Strike a pose!

Your youngster can use her own body weight to hold poses that will build strength in her arms and legs. Challenge her to do a handstand against the wall, get into a plank position, or balance on one foot. Make it a family contest to see who holds each pose the longest.

DID YOU KNOW?

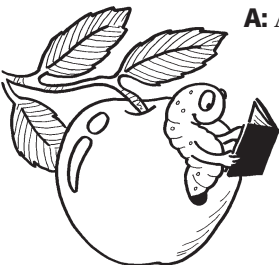
Nearly two-thirds of children drink a sugary beverage every day.

Instead of buying soda or sports drinks, fill a pitcher with water each morning, and ask your youngster to decide on a healthy add-in (cucumber slices, frozen strawberries). Refrigerate, and have him fill a water bottle, then keep it with him to drink and refill throughout the day.

Just for fun

Q: What reads and lives in an apple?

A: A bookworm.



Turn the tables on picky eating

“Mac and cheese again? You had it yesterday and the day before—and the day before that!” Sound familiar? Encourage your youngster to eat a wider variety of foods with ideas like these.

Be matter-of-fact

Your child may need to be exposed to a new food 10–20 times before she’ll accept it. Keep trying! Have her put a small serving on her plate every time you serve a food. If she says she won’t like it, tell her that’s okay—she might change her mind later. She’ll be more likely to take a bite (or two) if there’s no pressure.

Appeal to her senses

“This lentil curry is delicious!” Let your youngster see you enjoying a new dish, and invite her to get to know it. Ask her to think of foods she likes that are the same color or that have a similar



smell or texture. Maybe she’ll say lentil curry looks similar to Grandma’s baked beans. She’ll be more comfortable tasting the food if it feels a little more familiar.

Find winning combinations

Pair food your child loves with one she’s not crazy about or hasn’t tried. The combination of flavors may turn her into a fan. For example, top fish with sweet pineapple rings. Or offer her just about any vegetable with melted cheese, and watch her dig in. 🍷

Add learning to family walks

Turn an ordinary walk around the neighborhood into a learning adventure for your child. You’ll all get exercise—and he’ll explore math and science. Here’s how.

Collect (free) math supplies. Your youngster can carry a bag for gathering acorns, colorful leaves, pinecones, and other natural objects from the ground. Then, he could sort, count, and graph the items.

Observe nature. Encourage your child to carry a notebook and look for animals and plants on your walk. He might sketch and jot down notes about spiders, chipmunks, pine trees, and chrysanthemums. 🍷



Aim for more whole foods

A whole food is one that's found in nature, such as a banana or a carrot. We can eat it without adding ingredients like sugar, salt, or fat. Teach your child to eat more whole foods—and fewer processed ones—with these activities.

Rank foods. Ask your youngster to pick a dozen foods from your kitchen. Then, help him line them up from least to most processed. For instance, fresh fruits and vegetables could come first. In the middle, he would put foods that have been changed a little but are still good for him (applesauce with no



added sugar, plain popcorn, and whole-wheat bread). Finally, he can add any highly processed items like chips, cookies, or sugary cereals.

Make smart swaps. Together, create closer-to-whole versions of processed foods your child enjoys. Rather than eating toaster pastries for breakfast, he could toast whole-wheat bread and top it with peach slices and cinnamon. Instead of processed deli meats and cheeses, he

might make a sandwich with last night's leftover turkey and sliced avocado. ♡

PARENT TO PARENT

Books about healthy eating

My son John's class is doing a nutrition unit. The teacher emailed a list of books about healthy eating, and we got a few from the library.

First, John and I read *To Market, To Market* by Nikki McClure about a boy and his mom at a farmers' market. We learned how foods like honey and goat cheese get from farm to table.

Then we read *Cora Cooks Pancit* by Dorina K. Lazo Gilmore about a girl who helps her mother make a traditional Filipino dish.



We made pancit using the recipe in the book. John discovered that he likes rice noodles, so now we have a new option for when we make noodle dishes.

Reading seems like an easy way to teach John about healthy eating—and the books are inspiring us to cook together. ♡

ACTIVITY CORNER

Sidewalk games

Your youngster can turn your driveway or a playground blacktop into a game board. Here are two she can choose from.

Bull's-eye

Have your child use sidewalk chalk to draw a target with five rings labeled 1–5 (5 goes in the bull's-eye). Take turns standing six feet from the target and tossing five small rocks at it. Add the numbers your rocks landed on, and pick up your rocks. The player with the highest score after five rounds wins.



Chutes and Ladders

Make a life-sized version of this classic game. Your youngster can draw a grid with boxes, number them 1–16, and add several chutes (slides) and ladders. Start by the 1. Take turns rolling a die and hopping the number of squares rolled. Land at the bottom of a ladder, and hop to the top. Land at the top of a chute, and you must hop to the bottom! Win by being first to reach the last box (by exact count). ♡

IN THE KITCHEN

Tasty tortilla roll-ups

Keep a package of whole-wheat tortillas on hand for healthy meals and snacks. With just a little slicing-and-dicing help from you, your child can make and roll up her own creations.

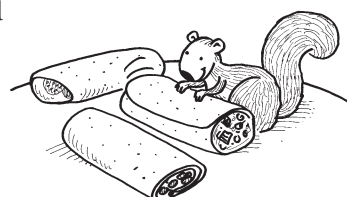
Barbecue chicken. Cover a tortilla with a thin layer of low-sodium barbecue sauce. Top with cooked chicken and shredded carrots and cabbage.

Egg salad. Stir a few drops of mustard into nonfat plain Greek

yogurt and spread on a tortilla. Add diced hard-boiled egg, chopped celery, and sliced scallions.

Southwestern. Spoon refried beans (canned, low-sodium) onto a tortilla. Add shredded low-fat pepper jack cheese, diced tomatoes, and diced green bell peppers.

Fruity breakfast. Cover a tortilla with low-fat cream cheese. Arrange frozen (thawed) blueberries and sliced strawberries on top. ♡



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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