

# Nutrition Nuggets

Food and Fitness for a Healthy Child

April 2021

Western Arizona Council of Governments

Head Start



## BEST BITES

### Nature's paintbrushes

Encourage your child to eat her fruits and vegetables by letting her "paint" with leftover scraps. For instance, she could dip a carrot top, an apple core, and a pineapple crown into paint. Then, she can use the "paint brushes" to spread or stamp the paint on paper to make a picture.

### Dance to the beat



Turn on upbeat music for a dance party with your youngster! Add props to encourage him to move more. He might spin in circles while trailing ribbons. Or suggest that he incorporate a hula-hoop or a soccer ball into his moves.

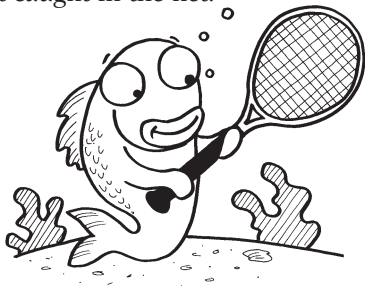
## DID YOU KNOW?

Kids may be tempted by soda and candy if they see their favorite TV and movie characters enjoying it. Look for examples of product placement when you watch shows with your child. Point out that just because a character drinks or eats something doesn't make it healthy. Can she think of healthier alternatives?

### Just for fun

**Q:** Why don't fish play tennis?

**A:** Because they're afraid they might get caught in the net.



## Breakfast around the world

What do children in other countries eat for breakfast? Encourage your youngster to expand his definition of "breakfast food" with these ideas inspired by popular choices from faraway lands.

### Noodles

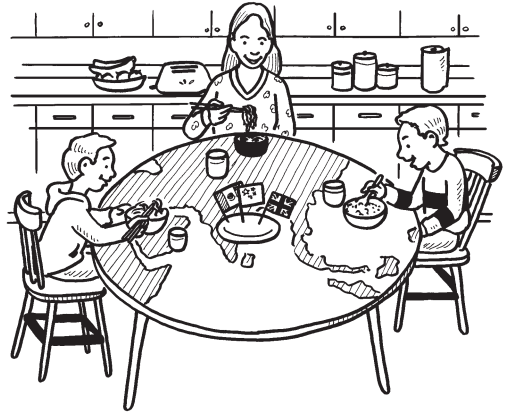
Kids in many Asian countries eat noodles for breakfast. Heat up leftover pasta in chicken or vegetable broth to make a soup. Or your child might toss noodles with sesame oil and peanut butter. Sprinkle in shredded carrot for crunch and vitamin A. *Idea:* Learn to eat noodles with chopsticks by watching online tutorials together.

### Porridge

In the United Kingdom, children call oatmeal *porridge*. And parents know it gives kids lasting energy, making it a smart way to start the day. Suggest that your child arrange apple slices, raisins, and blueberries on his porridge to make a smiley face.

### Beans

Beans make it easy to add extra protein to breakfast. In some Latin American



countries, kids enjoy beans with their eggs. Top a warm soft corn tortilla with a fried egg, cooked black beans, diced tomato, and low-fat shredded cheese. Your youngster can eat it with a side of tropical fruit like mango or kiwi.

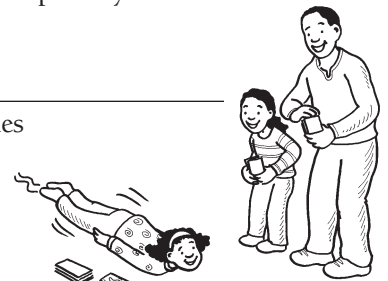
### Sandwiches

Many countries have their own versions of a breakfast sandwich. For a Middle Eastern twist, set out small plates of hummus, diced hard-boiled egg, and cucumber and tomato slices. Your child can stuff everything into a whole-wheat pita pocket or eat ingredients separately. ♥

## Fitness is in the cards

Tap into your youngster's love of card games to keep her active. How? By encouraging her to create her own deck of fitness cards to play with!

1. Have your child write and illustrate 20 exercises on separate index cards. *Examples:* "Pose like a flamingo." "Wiggle like a worm." "Run backward in a circle."
2. Now your youngster can shuffle the cards and deal them all out facedown.
3. The first player turns over her top card and rolls two dice. She does the movement the number of times rolled and earns that many points.
4. When all the cards have been used, high score wins. ♥



# Sweet strategies for less sugar

Soda and other sweet drinks are the leading source of sugar in children's diets. But that's far from the only source. Help your youngster cut back on the sweet stuff with these strategies.

**Stick to water and milk.** Get your child in the habit of drinking mainly water (or sparkling water) and plain fat-free milk. She should have no more than 4 to 8 oz. of 100%



fruit juice—including orange juice—per day.

**Choose condiments carefully.**

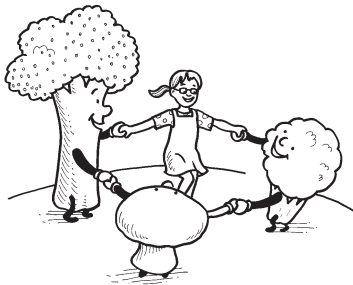
Teach your youngster to look for the words “no added sugar” on labels for foods like ketchup, pasta sauce, and jelly. If a variety without added sugar isn't available, help her compare to find the least sugary option. One brand of jelly might have 7 grams of sugar while another has 12!

**Satisfy with fruit.** Have your child sweeten her cereal and yogurt with berries and top pancakes and waffles with banana slices. Let her create her own recipe for fruit salad and make it for dessert. ♥

## Q&A Going vegetarian

**Q:** My daughter wants to become a vegetarian. How can I make meals that both she and the meat eaters in our house will eat?

**A:** Start by presenting your question to your family. Ask them what meatless dishes they like. Your child could make a list of those that everyone agrees on, such as vegetable frittatas, cauliflower curry, and green lentil soup. Then, work them into the rotation a couple of times a week.



On other nights, look for ways to give your daughter a meatless alternative. You might find recipes for foods to make and freeze, like chickpea burgers to heat up for her on burger night. If you cook fajitas, add mushrooms for hearty flavor, and serve chicken or steak separately.

You may discover that your whole family eats less meat—and enjoys it! ♥

## ACTIVITY CORNER

### Old-fashioned games

Your youngster will enjoy hearing about games children played in the “olden days.” Share some stories, and then try versions like these with him.

**Hoop and stick**

Draw lines with chalk up and down a driveway or sidewalk. Then, have each player use a stick to roll a hula-hoop from one end to the other. The first person to the finish line wins.



**Stickball**

Play this version of baseball with a broom or yardstick and a ball that bounces (such as a tennis ball). Let your child designate bases, perhaps a fire hydrant, trees, or lawn furniture. The pitcher lobs the ball, and the batter tries to hit it on one bounce. Play nine innings, and score runs as in baseball. High score wins. ♥

## IN THE KITCHEN

### Inspired by pizza

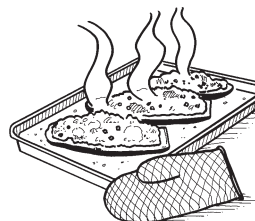
Pizza is tasty, but it can be hard not to overeat! Experiment with these healthier options.

**Veggie boats.** Use vegetables as the “crust.” Cut 2 zucchinis in half lengthwise. Brush the cut sides with olive oil and arrange on a baking sheet. Top with a thin layer of tomato sauce, and cover with shredded low-fat mozzarella cheese. Bake at 400° until the veggies

soften and the cheese melts, about 12–15 minutes.

**Chicken bowls.** Dice 1 lb. boneless chicken breasts, 1 green bell pepper, and 1 onion. Heat 1 tbsp. olive oil in a skillet, and sauté chicken and veggies until chicken is cooked through.

Divide mixture among four bowls. Stir ½ cup warm marinara sauce and ¼ cup grated Parmesan cheese into each bowl, and sprinkle with oregano. ♥



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