

Nutrition Nuggets

Food and Fitness for a Healthy Child

March 2014

O.S.S.U. School Nutrition Program
Serving Up Education Every Day!



BEST BITES

Veggie spaghetti

Whether you make spaghetti sauce from scratch or pour it from a jar, you can make it healthier by adding vegetables. Heat frozen peas and carrots, and stir them into your sauce. Or add sauteed zucchini, onions, and mushrooms. Spoon the sauce over whole-grain pasta or—for another serving of veggies—over spaghetti squash.

Be a tourist

Exploring new places is a great way to combine exercise and family time.



Drive to a nearby town, park the car, and walk

around. You might find an exciting playground, a kid-friendly museum, or a path with pretty scenery. Or look in the newspaper for festivals or flea markets. They could provide fun walking adventures, too.

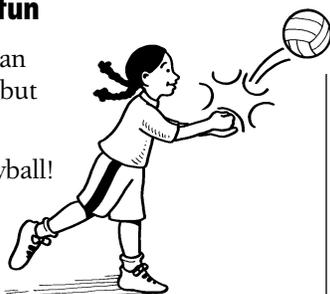
Helping out

Let your child see that cooking is a way to help people in need. When friends or relatives are sick, make nutritious meals for them together. Your youngster can rinse produce for a salad or measure ingredients for a casserole. *Idea:* For someone who is seriously ill, he might help you organize meals for the family on a site like mealtrain.com or lotsahelpinghands.com.

Just for fun

Q: What can you serve but never eat?

A: A volleyball!



Healthy ways to lose weight

Establishing good habits now can help an overweight child get on the road to better health. Consider these commonsense strategies.

Eat nutrient-dense foods

If you focus only on limiting calories, fat, and sugar, your youngster could wind up eating lots of foods that are low in the nutrients she needs. Instead, encourage her to eat healthy foods that are rich in nutrients, such as fruits, vegetables, whole grains, low-fat dairy, and lean protein. For a shopping list, see nutrientrichfoods.org/living-nutrient-rich/nutrient-rich-shopping-list/.

Don't drink your calories

On average, Americans drink about 400 calories a day. Help your child cut back on soda, juice drinks, and fruit punch by gradually replacing those daily drinks with water. Send reusable water bottles with her when she goes to activities. At home, she can drink tap water with meals and in between meals—it's



not only healthier than sugary drinks, it's also much cheaper.

Get plenty of exercise

Make sure your youngster gets at least 60 minutes of physical activity a day. This could be in large blocks or in small bursts throughout the day. Take advantage of activities she already likes (going to parks, walking the dog). Since children follow their parents' lead, let her see you being active, too. Find things your family will enjoy doing together, such as biking, kayaking, or playing backyard games. ♥

My tasting book

Your youngster can feel proud of tasting new foods by making a book of his experiences.

Each time he tries something, he could sketch the food and record the date on construction paper. Suggest that he add "tasting notes," too. For instance, he might write about how kiwi looks ("oval, brown, and fuzzy") and tastes ("sweet and a little sour all at once"). He could also do what food bloggers do and snap a photo of the dish to glue on the page.

Help him hole-punch his pages and put them into a binder. Every time he samples new foods, you can remind him that he's doing research for his book! ♥

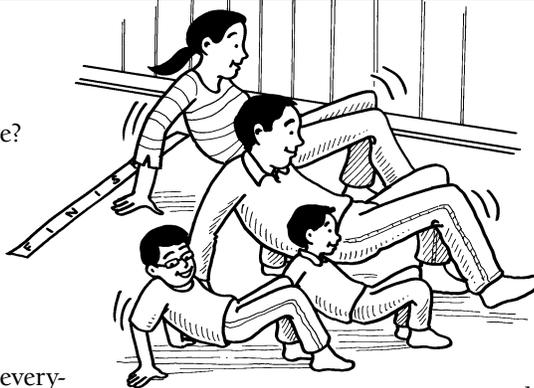


"Core fun"

Why does your child need a strong core? And what is a core anyway? Here are answers to these questions, along with activities to try.

What? The muscles around the abdomen, pelvis, hips, and back make up the body's core.

Why? Core muscles play a part in almost everything your youngster does, including sitting, standing, walking, and running. Core strength leads to better posture, more energy, better digestion, and even more self-confidence.



How? Build time into each day for "core fun":

● **Dead cockroach.** Lie on your back with your arms straight up and legs (bent out at the knees) in the air. Alternating sides, straighten one leg and reach for it with the opposite arm (lifting your shoulder off the ground).

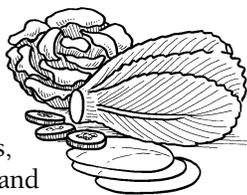
● **Crab race.** Mark start and finish lines. Then, each person should get into "crab position"—tummy side up, torso off the ground, and balancing on your feet and hands. Going backward, race to the finish line.

● **Family ball pass.** Sit in a circle with your feet out toward the center. Pass a ball from one person to the next—using only your feet. How many times can the ball go around without dropping? ●

IN THE KITCHEN Rock-and-roll

These recipes for "roll ups" are designed with kids in mind—they're fun to make and fun to eat.

Chicken. Cut up leftover chicken, and toss with chopped apples, halved grapes, and a mixture of honey and peanut or almond butter (say, $\frac{1}{2}$ tsp. honey to 1 tbsp. nut butter). Divide onto large lettuce leaves, and roll up.



Shrimp. Soak rice paper wrappers (available in grocery stores) in warm water for about 10 seconds, until soft. Lay each one flat, and add cooked shrimp, cucumber slices, and shredded carrot. Drizzle on a little hoisin sauce, and roll up tightly.

Vegetarian. Stir together shelled edamame, corn (canned, drained), diced mango, diced avocado, and low-fat ranch dressing. Cut the stem from a large green leaf (collard, spinach, Chinese or savoy cabbage, or kale). Top the leaf with a few spoonfuls of the mixture. Tuck in the sides, and roll. ●

PARENT TO PARENT

A child with celiac

Recently we found out that our son, Josh, has celiac disease and can't eat gluten anymore. I was worried about how to handle this, so I spoke with the school nurse.

She suggested giving Josh control over his own diet as much as possible. For instance, she said to read labels together and show him words to watch out for, such as *wheat, flour, graham, grain, barley, and rye.*

The nurse also advised us about what to do at school. We talked to the cafeteria manager about the school meal options for Josh and spoke with the lunchroom supervisor to make sure she knew Josh couldn't swap food. For the classroom, we gave Josh's teacher a bag of gluten-free treats so she'll have something to give him when other kids are getting treats. We know that having celiac isn't going to be easy for Josh, but we're glad to have strategies to start with. ●



ACTIVITY CORNER

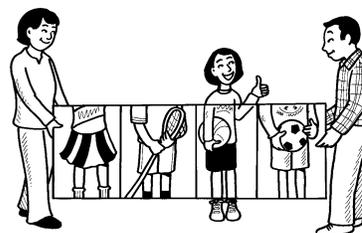
Finding the right sport

When it comes to sports, there is something for everyone. The key is finding an activity your child can succeed at and enjoy. These two ideas could help.

1. Let your youngster's interests guide you. What sports does she talk about, watch, or play with friends? If she's always running around, she might prefer a sport with more continuous movement like soccer, basketball, lacrosse, or

swimming. If she loves to dance, look at activities with more precise moves, such as gymnastics, figure skating, martial arts, or cheerleading.

2. Have your child try a sport for a season or two. If it's not her cup of tea, she could switch to a different one the next season. *Tip:* Be sure she finishes the season rather than quitting. She may get comfortable as she acquires skills—and she'll learn perseverance and responsibility. ●



OUR PURPOSE

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

Resources for Educators,
a division of CCH Incorporated
128 N. Royal Avenue • Front Royal, VA 22630
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.

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