

Nutrition Nuggets

Food and Fitness for a Healthy Child

March 2020

Towns Country Schools

BEST BITES

Positive peer pressure

When your youngster eats with friends at school or at home, encourage her to notice healthy foods they enjoy. She may be inspired to try something new, such as collard greens, polenta, or artichokes, just by seeing a friend eat it.



Act out the weather

What's the weather outside? Let your child show you, instead of telling you, with this active idea. Have him look outside and then "become" the weather. He might whirl around fast like the wind, stomp his feet and pound his arms for thunder, or dance with his arms outstretched on a sunny day.

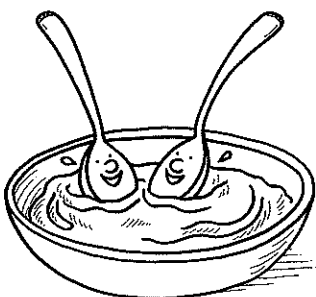
DID YOU KNOW?

Oregano is full of antioxidants, which can boost your youngster's immune system and help her stay healthy. Try adding fresh or dried oregano to salads and grilled meats or fish. Your child may like the flavor because it reminds her of pizza!

Just for fun

Q: What did one spoon say to the other?

A: Let's stir things up!



Calcium counts

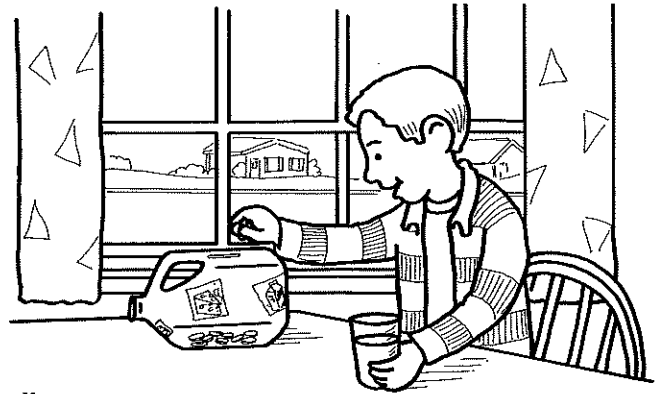
How can you get your child to eat more calcium? Appeal to his desire to be strong! Let him know that calcium builds strong bones for playing and growing. Then, try these ideas.

Fill a bank

Encourage your youngster to make a "calcium bank." First, turn a plastic milk jug on its side and cut a slit in it. Next, help him find magazine pictures of foods with calcium (milk, cheese, dark-green leafy vegetables). He could cut them out and glue them all over his bank. Each time he eats one of those foods, he puts a coin in the slot.

Add to every meal

Get your child used to having calcium throughout the day. Point out calcium-rich foods he's already eating (milk in his breakfast cereal, grilled cheese for lunch), and help him think of more he could have (baby spinach



in his sandwich, yogurt and fruit for dessert). *Tip:* Adding an 8-oz. glass of nonfat milk to a meal gives him another serving of calcium.

Cook with calcium

Add calcium to your youngster's diet by cooking with dairy products and foods that contain calcium. For instance, use nonfat milk instead of water when heating up canned tomato or mushroom soup. Melt Parmesan cheese onto cooked zucchini or green beans. Put tofu into a stir-fry, or stir white beans into chili. ●

Celebrate spring!

Enjoy the first day of spring on March 19, and get some exercise, by heading outdoors with your youngster. Here's how.

1. Take a walk. Look for signs of spring. Does your child hear woodpeckers pecking on trees or spot buds on bushes?

2. Visit a farm. Your youngster may see newborn lambs or other baby animals. Plus, some farms have play areas where she could climb on hay bales or play beanbag toss.

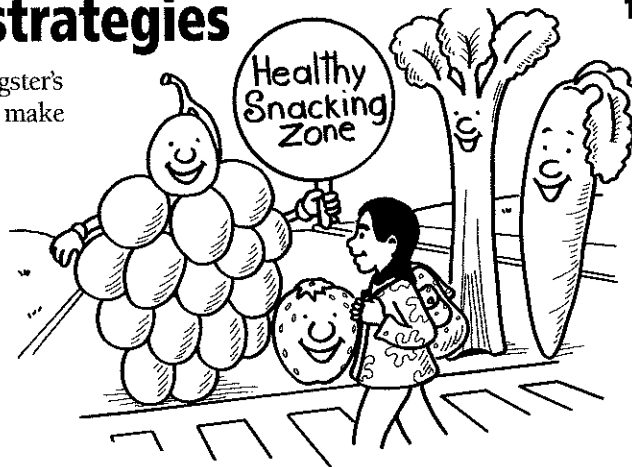
3. Do spring cleaning. Ask your child to help you wash the car or clean out the garage. She could also hose down her bike and outdoor toys. ●



Better snacking strategies

The right snacks satisfy your youngster's hunger in a healthy way. Teach her to make smart choices with these tips.

Pack smart. Send nutritious snacks that are appealing, portable, and easy to eat when your child is away from home. Many kids love finger foods like grapes, baby carrots, and string cheese. (Include an ice pack to keep cold foods cold.) *Note:* Be sure to follow her school's policy on snacks.



Think beyond "snack foods."

Foods your youngster normally eats at breakfast, lunch, and dinner can be snacks, too.

Together, think of examples, such as whole-grain toast with almond butter, a salad, or mini turkey meatballs.

Establish good habits. Help your child develop healthy snacking habits to avoid overeating or making poor food choices. You might limit snacking to the kitchen table and

put away electronics while you eat. Also,

look at packages together to find and measure out the healthy serving size. ●

ACTIVITY CORNER

Scarf games

Get two lightweight scarves (or cloth napkins) for these games that will boost your child's coordination.

● **Catch.** Take turns throwing a scarf in the air for the other person to catch. The scarf will float slowly to the ground, giving him time to catch it. This is a great way to build confidence as your youngster's catching skills improve.



● **Copycat.** Have each player hold a scarf, and take turns adding movements for each other to copy. Your child might do big arm circles with his scarf. You mimic him, then add a move, perhaps swooshing your scarf behind your back. Keep going, repeating all the previous movements and tacking on your own. When someone can't remember a move, the other player wins. ●

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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O&A Pasta every day?

Q: My daughter would eat the same foods every day if I let her—especially pasta. How can I get her to branch out?

A: It's normal for kids to prefer familiar foods, but a balanced diet will give your child a variety of nutrients.

Try starting with foods she likes and make small adjustments. For instance, serve spaghetti squash or "zoodles" (zucchini noodles) with your daughter's favorite pasta sauce. Or add chopped broccoli to macaroni and cheese.

You might also offer a new food as an appetizer before a meal, when your youngster is hungrier. Set out cucumber slices with a dip she'll eat, for instance.

Finally, keep in mind that it may take a dozen attempts or more before a child accepts a new food—so keep serving them in different ways until you find a winner! ●



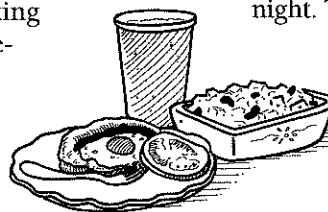
IN THE KITCHEN

Wake up with veggies

Fruit, toast, milk, eggs ... which food group is missing from that typical breakfast lineup? Vegetables! Round out your child's morning meal with these recipes.

Egg in a cap

Place a large portobello mushroom (stem and gills removed) upside down on a foil-lined baking sheet. Crack an egg carefully into the cap and bake at 375° for 15–20 minutes, until set. Top with chopped tomato.



Green smoothie

Let him blend 1 cup fresh spinach, 1 banana, 1 cup fat-free milk, ½ cup frozen cauliflower, and 1 tsp. each vanilla extract and honey.

Breakfast potatoes

Thaw 3 cups frozen potatoes (shredded or cubed) in the refrigerator overnight. Toss with 1 cup black beans and ½ cup each diced green and red peppers. Spread on a lightly greased baking sheet. Bake at 400° for 30 minutes. ●



Teen Food & Fitness

Healthy Ideas for Middle and High School Students

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FAST TAKES

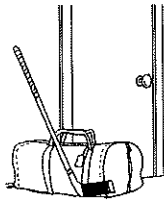


Baked onion rings

Does your teen love onion rings? Have her try this healthy version. Cut an onion into thick slices, and divide into rings. Whisk an egg in one bowl, and crush whole-grain cereal in another. Dip each ring into the egg and then into the cereal to coat. Spread on a cookie sheet, and bake at 375° for 30 minutes, flipping them halfway through.

Workout-ready

Having all his workout gear in one place makes it easier for your teen to exercise. Encourage him to pack a bag with everything he needs, such as sneakers, socks, a water bottle, a headband, and his community center ID. Then, he could put the bag by the door so it's ready when he is!



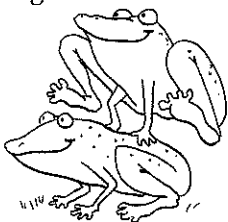
Did You Know?

Injured student athletes can be at risk for misusing prescription pain medication. If your teen gets hurt, encourage her to rest and heal instead of relying on medicine. Also, ask her doctor about alternative ways to manage pain. If she is prescribed pain pills, dispense them yourself, have her stop taking them as soon as possible, and discard leftovers.

Just for fun

Q: What is a frog's favorite game?

A: Leapfrog!



Nutrition know-how

Learning about nutrition can steer your child toward a healthier lifestyle. What's more, it may spark his interest in science, motivate him to do research, or even land him in a health- or food-related career. Share these ideas.

Explore science

Cooking can help your tween or teen understand chemistry. Suggest that he look online to find a kitchen experiment. Maybe he'll discover what makes bread rise or how beating a raw egg white makes meringue. Seeing chemical reactions firsthand lets him connect with the science he's studying in school.

Research issues

Is your teen considering going meatless, or does he want to eat more organic foods? Encourage him to research these choices. He could read about the benefits of a vegetarian diet or find out why organic products often cost more. His research will equip him with the facts he needs to make good decisions.



Investigate careers

Doctors and dietitians give people advice about what to eat. Chefs and school cafeteria managers use their knowledge of nutrition to plan menus. Your child can try out fields like these by interning at a health clinic, working in a restaurant, or taking a cooking class through the county recreation department. He'll explore nutrition, and he just might find a future career! ●

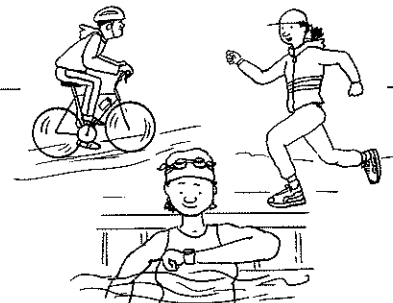
Run, bike, swim!

A triathlon: a 0.46-mile swim, a 12.4-mile bike ride, and a 3.1-mile run. A family triathlon: an exciting, active way to spend time together. Here's how to enjoy one with your teenager.

First, decide how you'll set up your triathlon. You could spread it out over a few weeks (run, bike, or swim every Sunday afternoon, for example). Or shorten the distances (run $\frac{1}{2}$ mile, bike a mile, and swim two laps), and do your triathlon in a day.

Then, look for places to hold your events. You might run on her school track, swim at an indoor community pool, or bike around your neighborhood.

When you finish, celebrate with a healthy dinner—and schedule your next triathlon! ●



This institution is an equal opportunity provider.

Beware of bullying

Kids who are overweight may be targets of bullying. If your tween or teen struggles with her weight, you can help her avoid struggling with being bullied, too. Consider these tips.

Watch for signs. Children who experience bullying often want to stay home from school when they're not sick or avoid activities they normally enjoy. Other signs might include torn clothing, missing possessions, or unexplained bruises or cuts.



Go over responses. Encourage your tween to walk away from bullies and find a friend or an adult. She might be reluctant to involve adults, so explain that bullying is a serious problem that parents and teachers need to be aware of.

Build confidence. Boost your teen's self-esteem by playing up her strengths (say, by mentioning what a loyal friend she is) or asking her advice on topics she knows about (which computer or cell phone to buy). You could also offer to join her in activities she likes to do, like taking walks or going to yoga classes. Finally, make it clear that her weight doesn't define her, no matter what a bully says. ♥

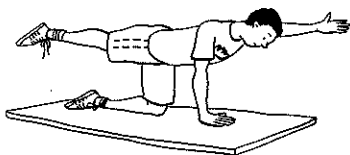
ACTIVITY CORNER



A stronger back

We use our back muscles all the time, but many people forget about exercising them. Suggest that your teen do moves like these to strengthen his back.

● **Slow windshield wipers.** Lie on your back with knees bent and feet flat on the floor. Slowly move both knees to one side, and hold for 10 seconds. (Be careful that your shoulders don't move, too.) "Windshield wiper" back and forth 2–3 times on each side.



● **Bird-dogs.** Start on hands and knees (hands shoulder-width apart and knees hip-width apart). Raise and straighten your left arm and right leg at the same time until both are parallel to the floor. Alternate arms and legs, working up to 10–15 repetitions per side. ♥

PARENT TO PARENT

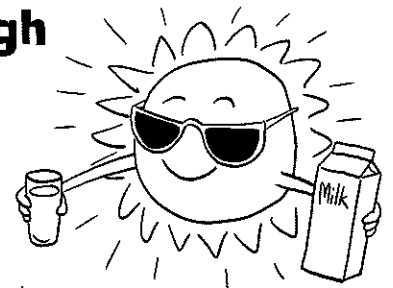
Getting enough vitamin D

During my son Jack's checkup, I was surprised when the doctor asked how much time he spends outside.

The doctor explained that sunshine—even winter sunshine—helps our bodies produce vitamin D, which is important for bone health. Being outdoors just 10–30 minutes a day can be beneficial, he said. The doctor also recommended that Jack drink vitamin D–fortified milk and eat foods that contain vitamin D, such as eggs, tuna, and some varieties of mushrooms.

Jack is not a big milk drinker, but he agreed to try to have at least a glass a day. We also decided that he'll be the one to walk the dog after school to get some exercise—and a dose of vitamin D.

Note: The daily recommended amount of vitamin D for teens is 600 IUs (international units). One cup of milk contains 115–124 IUs. ♥



In the Kitchen

Fajitas three ways

Easy to make and fun to eat, fajitas are a tasty, all-in-one weeknight meal. Try these healthy varieties.

Chicken

Sprinkle diced boneless chicken breast with lemon juice, and toss with chopped zucchini and sliced mushrooms. Saute in a little olive oil until the chicken is cooked through. Wrap in whole-wheat tortillas, and spoon salsa on top.

Veggie

Stir-fry cauliflower pieces and sliced yellow

squash, onions, and red and green bell peppers until veggies soften. Place in corn tortillas, and top with avocado chunks, pico de gallo, and low-fat shredded cheese (cheddar or pepper jack).

Steak

Squeeze a lime over strips of lean beef, and cook thoroughly in a skillet coated with nonstick spray. Add to whole-grain tortillas along with steamed brown rice, diced tomatoes, and raw chopped broccoli. Top with Greek yogurt. ♥



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