

Nutrition Nuggets

Food and Fitness for a Healthy Child

May 2009

M.S.A.D. 68

BEST BITES



An open mind

We all have foods we like and don't like. Let your child form his own opinions. Rather than mentioning your own dislikes, encourage him to try all kinds of healthy foods. He may wind up loving broccoli—even if you won't touch it!



Activity log

Motivate your youngster to exercise by keeping a weekly family log. Help her create a tracking sheet on the computer, and make it your screen saver. Ask the whole family to enter their activities (cheerleading, jogging) and time spent (30 minutes, 60 minutes). Add up the minutes on Sunday night, and then start again.



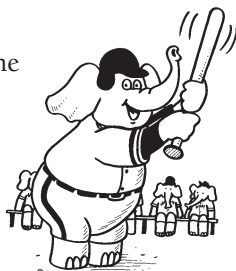
DID YOU KNOW?

Americans eat nearly 100 acres of pizza every day! Here's a way to make a nutritious version of this crowd-pleaser. Buy a pre-baked, thin pizza crust. Top with bell peppers, mushrooms, tomatoes, and skim mozzarella cheese. Bake at 400° for about 10 minutes, until the cheese bubbles.

Just for fun

Q: What does it mean when you see nine elephants wearing the same jersey?

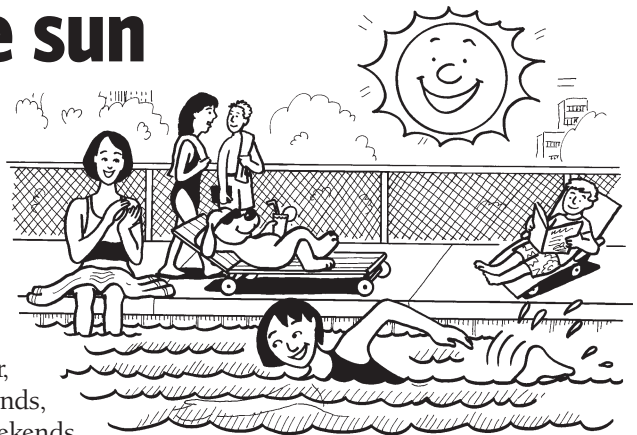
A: They're on the same baseball team!



Fun in the sun

Summer is almost here! Start planning now for ways to keep your child physically active throughout the school break. Here are some ideas to get started:

- Make biking a part of your family routine. Together, bike to the pool, to meet friends, or to the post office. On weekends, take bike rides along a nature trail or through a state park.
- Work fitness into vacations or visits to relatives. You might hike, go canoeing, or play tennis. On long car trips, plan to stop along the way for a walk or to tour a landmark.
- Swimming is the perfect summer exercise. Look for low-cost or free options like a community or public pool. Sign your youngster up for lessons if she doesn't know how to swim. *Safety note:* Be sure to keep a careful eye on her while she's in the pool.
- Play outside together. Go out after dinner for a game of freeze tag or



hide-and-seek. Have a basketball shootout (see who can make the most baskets in a row), or play follow the leader through the neighborhood.

- Have sports equipment handy. For example, put different-sized balls, hula hoops, jump ropes, soccer cones, skates, and scooters in a large container or on shelves. Keep costs down by shopping at yard sales or the dollar store, or ask family and friends for hand-me-downs.
- Build in time for free play in your neighborhood, at the playground, or in a park. When your youngster finds other children to play with, they'll think of all kinds of active games on their own! ♥

Beware! Nutrition traps to avoid

Carnivals... ballgames... trips. Along with summer fun come a few challenges to healthy eating. Avoid junk food with these suggestions.

Eat first. Before setting out for a carnival, fair, or sporting event, eat a meal at home. If your children are full, they'll be less likely to clamor for hot dogs or cotton candy. Cut down on the junk food and the expense by allowing them to pick one healthier snack each, such as a soft baked pretzel, roasted peanuts, or air-popped popcorn.

Take your own. Pack a cooler to carry with you on car, plane, or train trips. You might take sandwiches like turkey and cheese on whole-grain bread or hummus and sliced carrots in a pita pocket. *Other ideas:* sliced raw vegetables, fresh fruit, rice cakes, and yogurt pouches. ♥

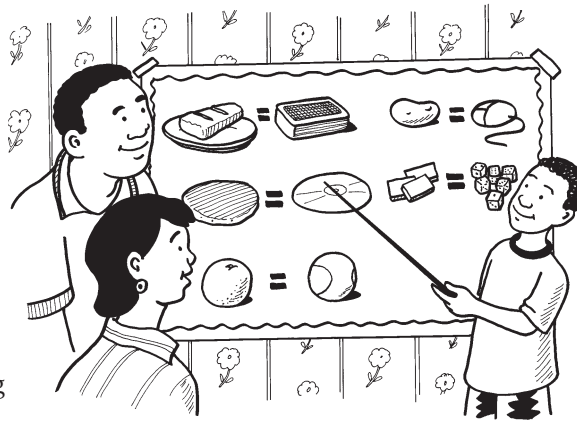


Portion control

Knowing what to eat is important, but knowing how much to eat is just as important. Help your youngster learn the basics of portion control, and he'll develop healthy habits for a lifetime.

Find it

Together, look for examples of serving sizes. Help your child read food labels and put out actual portions (4 crackers, 1 cup of cereal). Or show him ways to compare portions to everyday items (a pancake should be the size of a CD). Find more examples online (try <http://hp2010.nhlbihin.net/portion/servingcard7.pdf>), or have your child make up his own by using the portions on labels and looking for objects that match.



For instance, 3 oz. of chicken = a deck of cards, 1 orange = a baseball, 1½ oz. of cheese = 6 dice, 1 baked potato = a computer mouse.

Use it

Ask your child to gather these objects and put them in a bowl as a centerpiece for your kitchen table. At mealtime, he can match his servings to the item. Eventually, he'll be able to spot right-size portions on his own. ♥

ACTIVITY CORNER

Food science

Food fuels our bodies, is delicious to eat—and makes a terrific science lesson. Here are two fun activities that will build your youngster's knowledge about food and science.

Moldy bread. Let your child set up an experiment with four slices of bread. Have her put one in the sunlight and one in a paper bag or dark cupboard. She should put the other two slices on a counter, one moistened with a few drops of water and the other one left dry. Have her examine the pieces daily. She'll find that mold grows faster in dark or moist conditions—and she'll understand why bread should be stored in a light, dry place.



Plastic milk. Help your youngster combine 1 cup of milk and 2 tbsp. of vinegar in a saucepan. Watch as she stirs the mixture over medium heat. When the milk curdles, help her pour it into a strainer. The solids that are left are the curds. And she'll have made "plastic milk" that she can squeeze into a ball and bounce! ♥



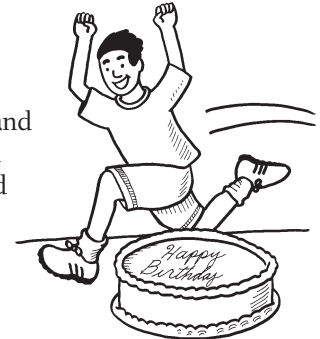
PARENT TO PARENT

A winning party

My son's birthday was approaching, and he wanted a video game party. I groaned inside, imagining a group of 10-year-old boys huddled around a television on a beautiful afternoon. I told David his idea sounded like fun, but why not do something more active? We brainstormed and came up with some possibilities—bowling, soccer, a scavenger hunt, or Olympics.

He loved the Olympics idea, and we decided on "David's Decathlon," a party with 10 fun challenges. For example, guests could throw balls into trash-can targets, do a long jump, and run an obstacle course.

On party day, we posted the list of events and recorded each person's score. At the end, we held a "closing ceremony" and gave each child a medal. I was happy that the kids were active—and David felt like a winner! ♥

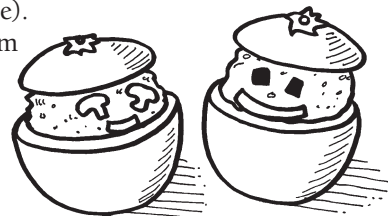


IN THE KITCHEN

Juicy tomato ideas

Tomatoes and summer go together. Whether your child grows her own or picks them out at the market, she'll enjoy making these tasty creations with you.

Tomato head. Help your youngster carefully cut off the top of a tomato and scoop out the insides. She can fill the shell with tuna or egg salad (made with low-fat mayonnaise). Have her add mushroom or olive "eyes" and a mouth-shaped slice of cheese. The tomato top makes the perfect hat!



Muffin melt. Layer low-fat cheddar cheese and sliced tomatoes on whole-wheat English muffin halves. Broil until the cheese melts. *Idea:* Add a few spinach leaves for extra nutrition.

No-cook pasta sauce. Prepare whole-wheat pasta (rotini, penne) according to package directions, and drain. Toss with chopped tomatoes, basil (fresh, if possible), olive oil, and parmesan cheese. *Note:* This dish is good hot, cold, or at room temperature. ♥



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 Aspen Publishers, Inc.
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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