Nutrition Nuggets™

Food and Fitness for a Healthy Child

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Ketchikan Gateway Borough School District

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BEST BITES

Stock up on cranberries

Remember to stash extra bags of fresh cranberries in your freezer this month. Although these antioxidant powerhouses are available in supermarkets only during late fall and early winter, they freeze well for up to 12 months. Try serving fresh cranberry sauce with roast chicken—it's a delicious combination any time of the year.

Winter-weather layering

To help your child stay comfortable during cold-weather activities, encourage him to wear layers. First comes a snug bottom layer made of polyester or wool to move sweat away from his skin. Then, add an insulating layer to retain heat. Top it off with a waterproof outer layer to keep him dry and block the wind.

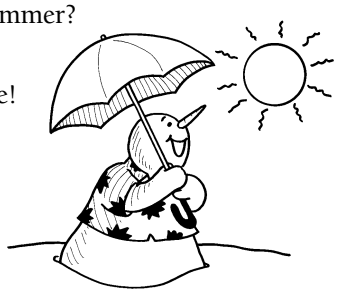
DID YOU KNOW?

Fight cold and flu season with the help of the right foods. Yogurt's good bacteria protect our digestive system against germs. The vitamin C in oranges, lemons, and limes can reduce a cold's duration. And then there's chicken soup, a winter favorite that helps the body rid itself of viruses and bacteria.

Just for fun

Q: What do you call a snowman in the summer?

A: A puddle!



Incorporate nutrients—playfully

Calcium, vitamin D, potassium, and fiber are in short supply in many children's diets. Try these strategies to boost your youngster's intake of these important nutrients.

Breakfast stars

Many breakfast foods are rich in calcium. Help your child write a list of these foods, such as milk, cheese, and fortified orange juice and cereal. Each time he eats one, he can draw a star next to it. How long before he reaches 10 stars? 20 stars? 30 stars?

Rainy day vitamin D

Vitamin D is made in the skin when it is exposed to sunlight. The vitamin is also in some foods, including tuna, salmon, and egg yolks. On a rainy day when your youngster can't play outside, cook a meal together featuring one of these foods. Tuna salad sandwiches, baked salmon fillets, or scrambled eggs are all easy options.

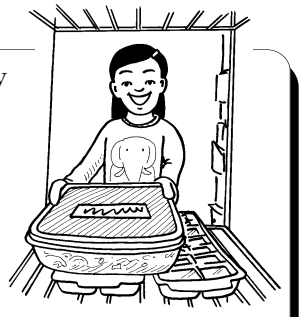
Veggie color wheel

Produce often has potassium. Ask your child to draw a color wheel on a paper plate and glue on pictures of matching fruits and vegetables—for example, bananas in the yellow section and kale in the green. Let him add a spinner (cut a cardboard arrow, and attach it with a brad). Each day, he could spin to pick a fruit or vegetable to try.

Fiber ABCs

Challenge your youngster to come up with a "fiber food" that starts with each letter of the alphabet. (*Hint:* All plant-based foods have fiber.) He could look for foods like these while you're grocery shopping: apples, barley, carrots, and dates.

Cook once, eat twice



Shorten kitchen time by doubling your favorite healthy recipes and freezing the extra for later. Use these tips.

Freeze this, not that. Soups, stews, beans, cooked meats and poultry, mashed potatoes, grated hard cheeses, casseroles, and breads all freeze well. Not so with soft cheeses, baked potatoes, cooked pasta, or moisture-laden raw foods like cucumbers, oranges, lettuce, and watermelon.

Store. Wrap frozen foods airtight to maintain freshness. Get your child involved by having her help package and label them with the contents and date. She could even add her initials so she'll enjoy eating "her" meal!

Defrost. For food safety, always defrost items in the refrigerator or a microwave.

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Active fun for a crowd

Holiday get-togethers are a perfect time for grown-ups and children to team up for active fun. Here are ideas.

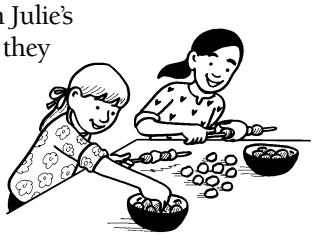
Juggle balloons. Start with one balloon per person. Work cooperatively to keep all the balloons in the air. Then, try using two or three balloons per person. *Variations:* Play "no hands"—players have to juggle the balloons with their elbows, wrists, heads, knees, or feet.

Organize a soccer game. Head to a field, and divide up into teams, balancing out ages and soccer experience. Consider leaving the goals unattended for a high-scoring game! Another benefit: Everyone will be running during the whole game (goalies sometimes spend more time watching than playing).

Play snowball golf. In a snow-filled area, set up a "golf course" by identifying 18 targets—say, the side of a fence, a large rock, or a tree branch. Players take turns throwing a snowball at each target, trying to hit it in as few throws as possible. Just like in golf, the person with the lowest score wins.

PARENT TO PARENT: A cooking playdate

My daughter Julie likes to cook, so I wasn't surprised when she asked to invite a friend over for a cooking playdate. We found a clever idea online for pizza skewers and got the ingredients ahead of time.



Then, when Julie's friend arrived, they washed the cherry tomatoes and rolled small balls of pizza dough. They had fun alternating them on wooden skewers and brushing them with olive oil. While I broiled the skewers, the girls heated marinara sauce in the microwave. They sprinkled shredded mozzarella on the skewers, and I returned them to the broiler until the cheese melted.

After the skewers cooled, the girls enjoyed dunking the pieces in the marinara sauce. Both said it was the best pizza they had ever eaten! And before Julie's friend left, they made plans for another cooking playdate next week.

ACTIVITY CORNER: Fitness x 2

With these activities, your youngster will work on his math skills while getting a workout:

- Ask your child to estimate the steps it would take him to walk from your front door to the mailbox. Then, have him walk and count. How close did he come? Or he might estimate the number of hops—and then hop down the hall or walkway to check.
- Mark a starting line. One by one, each player leaps forward as far as he can. Another player marks where the person's feet landed. Have your youngster measure each person's jump. Who will jump the farthest?
- Call out an equation. Then, players race around the yard or house to find objects totaling the solution. For example, yell "9 – 2," and a player might gather 7 leaves or 7 blocks. The first person back with the right number of items gets to call out the next math problem.

IN THE KITCHEN: Yummy food gifts

Help your child make food gifts like these to give to teachers and relatives. He could even add a gift tag with a note like "Happy healthy holiday!"

Fruity granola

In a bowl, mix 4 cups rolled oats, $1\frac{1}{2}$ cups pumpkin and sunflower seeds, $\frac{1}{2}$ tsp. salt, $\frac{1}{2}$ tsp. ground cinnamon, $\frac{1}{2}$ cup oil, $\frac{1}{2}$ cup maple syrup, 1 tsp. vanilla extract, and $\frac{2}{3}$ cup chopped dried fruit. Spread on a large foil-lined baking sheet. Bake at 325° for 15 minutes. Let cool completely. Store in an airtight container.

Spiced apricot tea mix

Combine 5 tbsp. loose decaf or herbal tea, 6 chopped dried apricots, 4 tbsp. chopped crystallized ginger, 2 tsp. whole allspice, 2 tsp. whole cloves, and 6 crushed cinnamon sticks. Store in a metal tin. Enclose these directions: "To use, place 2 heaping tsp. in a tea infuser. Steep in hot water for 3 minutes."

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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