Nutrition Nuggets™

Food and Fitness for a Healthy Child

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Stephenson Public Schools

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BEST BITES

Junior chef

Get your child excited about helping in the kitchen by letting her dress the part. Find a large white button-down shirt she can wear like a chef's outfit. Have her write her name on a mailing label ("Chef Suzy") and stick it on. Hand her a colorful spatula, and enjoy cooking together.

Swap parsnips for potatoes

Make "french fries" from parsnips, a root vegetable that's high in fiber and folate. Peel 2 lbs. parsnips, and cut into thick strips. Toss with 2 tbsp. olive oil, $\frac{1}{2}$ tsp. salt, and $\frac{1}{4}$ tsp. pepper. Place on a baking sheet, and bake 10 minutes at 450°. Flip, and roast 10 minutes more.

DID YOU KNOW? Swimming builds endurance, strengthens all muscle groups, and is easy on joints and bones. Encourage your youngster to swim year-round with trips to an indoor community pool. He might take swim lessons or sign up for a winter league. *Ideas:* Join him in the pool and swim together, race against each other, or play tag.

Just for fun

Q: What's green and bumpy and jumps every few seconds?

A: A pickle with hiccups.

Get healthier together!

Make eating better and getting fit a family affair this year. Being "in it together" can keep everyone motivated. Use these simple tips to get started.

Be a role model

Your youngster will copy your good *and* not-so-good behaviors. Telling him to eat an orange while you munch on potato chips sends a mixed message, as does using your tablet while encouraging him to go shoot baskets. A better approach? Ask him to help you cut apples for a snack, or suggest that you play basketball together.

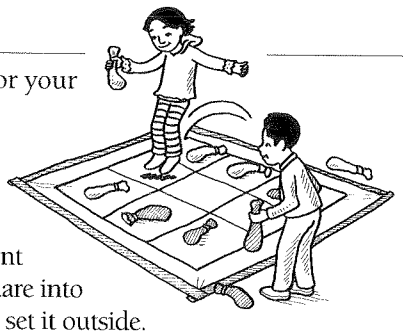
Focus on variety

Instead of dieting or emphasizing foods to avoid, identify healthy foods to *add* to meals. Think: fresh fruits, crisp vegetables, beans and lentils, nuts, seeds, whole grains, and lean protein. This ensures you're not limiting nutrients your growing child needs. It also pushes less-nutritious foods off your plates.

Increase physical activity

Brainstorm regular family fitness ideas with your youngster, then put them on the calendar. You might try nightly after-dinner walks or Saturday morning bike rides. Move more during everyday activities, too. Park farther from your destination, take the stairs rather than the elevator, or shovel snow together. Before you know it, being more active will become a household habit.

DIY supersized fun



Looking for some life-size entertainment for your child? Let her create a giant tic-tac-toe board!

Materials: *old sheet, marker, duct tape, 10 old socks (5 of one color and 5 of another), dry beans, rubber bands*

Help your youngster measure and draw a giant square on the sheet. Draw lines dividing the square into 9 equal boxes, and tape the sheet to the floor, or set it outside. Make beanbags by filling socks with beans and sealing them shut with rubber bands.

Each player gets 5 same-color beanbags. Now take turns hopping into a square, dropping a beanbag, and hopping out. The first to get three in a row across, down, or diagonally wins.

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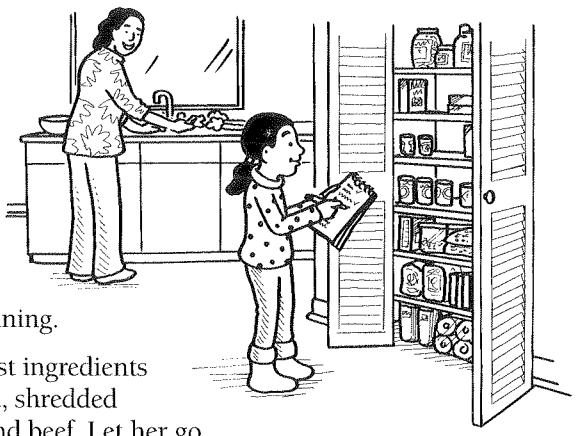
A well-stocked kitchen



With the right ingredients on hand, you can quickly whip up nutritious dinners on busy weeknights. Plus, you'll avoid last-minute impulse purchases or costly takeout. Try these steps for shopping and planning.

1. Take inventory. Help your child list ingredients you use frequently, such as rice, pasta, shredded cheese, green beans, bread, and ground beef. Let her go through the refrigerator and pantry and cross out items you already have. *Bonus:* She'll practice reading and writing.

2. Stock up. Shop together for ingredients that remain on your list. Look for healthy swaps, such as whole-wheat bread rather than white, frozen vegetables instead of canned, and extra-lean ground beef in place of regular.

3. Figure out meals. Ask your youngster to help you create nutritious menus based on what's on hand. For instance, if you've got whole-grain spaghetti and a jar of marinara sauce, there's an easy meal. To make it healthier, grate zucchini and stir into the sauce. Have a can of black beans and some brown rice? Just add cooked broccoli for a healthy rice bowl.

PARENT TO PARENT What's in your smoothie?

My son Liam loves our local smoothie place, and I'm happy he's getting more fruit into his diet. But recently, I noticed a sign listing nutrition information, and I realized his favorites have a lot of sugar and fat. So I decided to start making smoothies at home in the blender.

We experiment with fruit combinations like strawberry and banana or peach and mango. Instead of flavored yogurt, which has a lot of sugar, I use plain yogurt and a little honey. Sometimes I include peanut butter or flaxseed for protein. I've even added kale and spinach so my son gets greens.

Liam enjoys our homemade smoothies, and now he's eating more fruits *and* vegetables—and less sugar and fat.

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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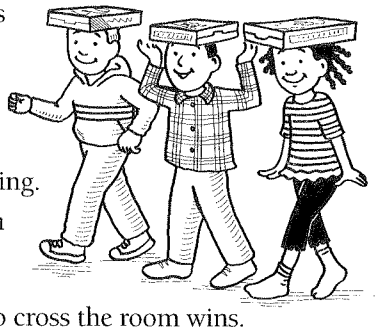
ACTIVITY CORNER Boosting balance skills

Set your youngster up for success in sports and games by helping her improve her balance. Consider these fun ideas.



- **Flamingo contest:** See who can stand on one foot the longest. Switch legs, and do it again. To increase the challenge, close your eyes while balancing.
- **Cereal box challenge:** Have each person place an empty cereal box on her head. Keeping your back straight and chin up, race across the room. If you drop your box, return to the start. The first player to cross the room wins.
- **Hula hop:** Scatter a few hula-hoops on the ground a few feet from each other (or make circles with pieces of yarn). Family members can jump into each hula-hoop—without losing their balance and falling outside the hoop. Try it again, this time jumping backward.

IN THE KITCHEN Slow-cooked meals

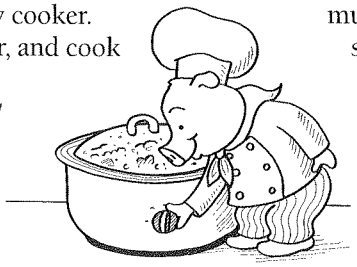
Tap into the power of your slow cooker with these recipes to enjoy on cold winter days.

Chicken-quinoa risotto

Place 1½ lbs. boneless chicken breasts into a slow cooker. Add 1 cup uncooked quinoa, 2 cups low-sodium chicken broth, and 2 cloves minced garlic. Cook on high 4 hours. Shred chicken, and return to slow cooker. Add 2 cups frozen peas, stir, and cook 30 minutes more.

Vegetarian "pot roast"

Chop 1 lb. mushrooms (white or portobello), 1 lb. sweet potatoes, and 2 carrots. Put in slow cooker with 2 cups vegetable stock, 1 tbsp. tomato paste, 1 tsp. dried thyme, ¼ tsp. salt, ¼ tsp. pepper, and ½ tsp. garlic powder. Cook on low 6–8 hours.

Beef stroganoff

Fill slow cooker with 1½ lbs. lean stew meat, 1 medium onion (diced), 1 cup low-sodium beef broth, 2 tbsp. Worcestershire sauce, 2 tbsp. Dijon mustard, and ¼ tsp. each salt and pepper. Cook on low 6–8 hours. Stir in 1 cup Greek yogurt just before serving. Enjoy over whole-grain egg noodles.