

Nutrition Nuggets

Food and Fitness for a Healthy Child

April 2009

Longs Creek Elementary School

CATCH Committee

Northeast Independent School District
Dr. Richard A. Middleton, Superintendent



BEST BITES

Go light

When it comes to cheese, a little can go a long way. Rather than using whole slices, grate cheese into your child's sandwiches or omelets.



You'll cut down on the fat, calories, and sodium that way. Also, look for reduced-fat and reduced-sodium versions of your youngster's favorite cheeses.

DID YOU KNOW?

More schools, community centers, and recreation departments are addressing the childhood obesity crisis by offering fitness classes for kids.

Check library and grocery store bulletin boards or school Web sites for free or low-cost programs. Then, sign your child up for an after-school or a weekend activity he can enjoy with friends.



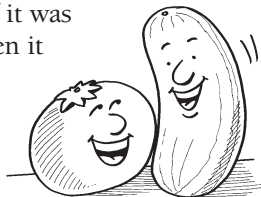
Cooking playdate

When your youngster invites a friend over, suggest a cooking playdate. Help them look through cookbooks for a healthy recipe, and then supervise them in the kitchen. They'll have a great time mixing and stirring, and they'll want to eat the nutritious food they make.

Just for fun

Q: Why is a tomato round and red?

A: Because if it was long and green it would be a cucumber!

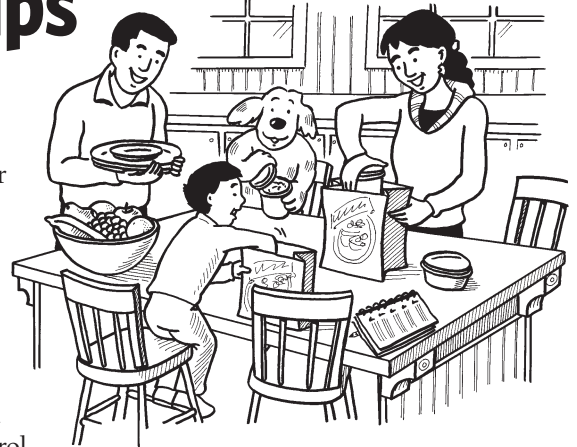


Fast food tips

Does your busy family eat fast food often? You're certainly not alone. But quick doesn't have to mean unhealthy. Try these tips for a healthier trip to the drive-thru.

Do your homework

Have your child research nutrition facts for his favorite fast food chains (on their Web sites, in brochures at the restaurants). Ask him to find items that are lower in calories, fat, cholesterol, and sodium.



Make sample menus

Suggest that he put together a few healthy menus and write them in a notebook (*example*: small hamburger with mustard, baked potato with salsa, water). Keep the notebook in the car so he can refer to it when you stop for food.

Choose healthy drinks

Watch the drinks—one supersize soda can add 425 calories to a meal! Have your youngster drink water or fat-free milk

instead. *Idea*: He can squeeze a lemon wedge into the water to add flavor.

Try something new

Instead of a bun, your child could request a "lettuce wrap." Ask the clerk to serve a burger or grilled chicken with a large lettuce leaf, and your youngster can wrap it up to eat.

Eat at home

Did you know that people tend to eat more when they eat out? Try ordering the main meal only and then adding healthy vegetables and fruit at home. 🍎

Stocking your pantry

A key to healthy snacking is having the right foods on hand. Try these ideas for stocking your pantry with foods your kids will eat:

- Replace potato chips with baked veggie, pita, or tortilla chips. Or get low-fat graham crackers or flavored soy crisps (ranch or barbecue, for example).
- Choose a variety of whole-grain cereals, crackers, bagels, and rice cakes. Other good choices include oatmeal and low-fat granola and cereal bars.
- Fruit is always healthy. Try applesauce, canned fruits (packed in their own juice), and dried fruits like raisins, apples, figs, and blueberries.
- Seeds, such as sunflower or pumpkin seeds, are filled with minerals. Pistachios or mixed nuts make a tasty, high-fiber snack.

Tip: Put the items you want your children to eat the most often at their eye level. Place "sometimes" foods on higher shelves. 🍎



Active learning

Learning and exercise can go together! Try these fun ideas for combining physical activity and skill building.

Act out verbs. Brainstorm a list of 20 action words. *Examples:* gallop, slither, crawl, jump. Have your youngster write each word on an index card. Take turns drawing a card and doing what it says.

Make a web. Read a book about spiders (try *Spinning Spiders* by Melvin Berger), and then make a web together. Each person unwinds a ball of yarn through obstacles (over a sofa, under a table, around chair legs). Switch yarns, and walk back through the web, rewinding the ball. The first to finish wins.



Solve math problems. Help your child draw a 25-box grid (5 boxes across, 5 boxes down) with chalk on a driveway or blacktop, and number them 1–25. Call out a math problem ($6 \times 2 = \underline{\quad}$), and have her jump to each number and the answer (12). Then, let her give you a problem to solve.

Spell it out. Challenge your child to make letters with her body. She could move through the whole alphabet, curving her body into A, B, C, and so on. Or she can form her spelling words one letter at a time. ♥

ACTIVITY CORNER An herb garden

Growing herbs is a great way for children to learn about gardening—and about ways to spice up food.

Start by going together to pick out plants and seeds. Good choices include basil, chives, oregano, and mint.



If you have room, let your child plant the herbs outside. Or consider a clay pot garden. He can decorate the pots with markers or paint and even name and label his plants (“Bobby Basil” or “Ollie Oregano”). Have him set the pots on a sunny windowsill or on a deck or porch.

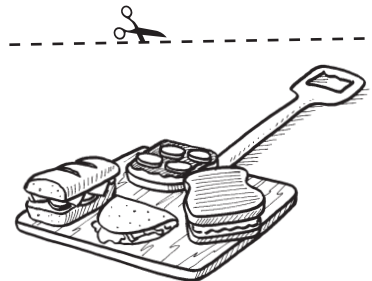
As the herbs grow, talk about ways your youngster will use them. You might plan a pizza night so he can sprinkle oregano on top of the tomato sauce and cheese. Or he could put sprigs of mint into iced tea for guests. ♥



IN THE KITCHEN Panini time

Take healthy items, put them between two pieces of bread, press down, and cook. The result? A delicious panini sandwich! Try these combinations.

- On a baguette spread with pesto sauce, layer tomato slices and skim mozzarella cheese.
- Spread hummus on a whole-wheat tortilla. Cover with mushrooms and shredded carrots. Fold in half.
- Layer lean corned beef or turkey, sauerkraut, and Swiss cheese on rye bread.
- Put leftover chicken or beef strips, chopped romaine lettuce, shredded



cheddar cheese, and low-fat mayonnaise on whole-grain bread.

Note: You can buy an inexpensive panini maker, or simply weight down the sandwich with a soup can in a skillet (coated with cooking spray) until it’s crisp on the bottom. Then flip and weight it down again until the other side is browned. ♥

Q & A Gluten-free eating

Q: We recently learned that our daughter has celiac disease. How can we find foods she can eat?

A: People with celiac disease cannot digest gluten, a protein that’s in wheat and some other foods. Fortunately, grocery stores are carrying more gluten-free products these days.

Take your daughter shopping with you, and teach her to read food labels carefully. Together, make a list of words she should

watch out for. *Examples:* wheat, flour, soy sauce, malt, rye, couscous, oats, graham, grain, barley.

If she goes to a friend’s house or a party, let her pack a snack to take along. When you eat out, you can help her find safe foods on the menu. Some restaurants will substitute ingredients if you ask.

Learning to live with celiac disease is an adjustment, but with support and planning, your daughter will find plenty of foods she can eat. ♥



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