

# Nutrition Nuggets

Food and Fitness for a Healthy Child

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## BEST BITES

### Brush your teeth

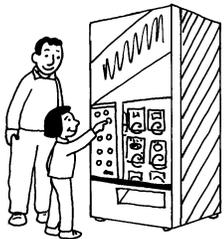
Encourage your child to brush her teeth after every meal and snack at home. It will help prevent cavities—and it will signal to her that she has finished eating. When she has a nice minty taste in her mouth, she won't be as likely to "ruin" it with potato chips or a piece of candy.

### DID YOU KNOW?

Early-morning exercise can help your youngster learn better by improving his attention span and ability to listen. Set your alarms for 10 minutes earlier so he can shoot hoops or play catch after breakfast. Or if you live close enough, walk or bike to school instead of driving.

### Vending machines

Children love to put coins in a vending machine, press a button, and



have food pop out. Keep the fun, but suggest healthy choices by using vending machines as a teachable moment. Talk

about the foods in the machine, and ask your youngsters which ones they think have more "good stuff" like vitamins, protein, or calcium.

### Just for fun

**Q:** What has 100 legs but can't walk?

**A:** Fifty pairs of pants.



## Add a dash of fun

Making it fun to eat nutritious foods is a surefire way to get your youngster on board. So go ahead, make it cool to be healthy! Here are a few ideas to get you started.

### Who am I?

Come to the table as your favorite vegetable. Your child could blow up green balloons and tape them to his shirt—he's peas. Or you might put on an orange shirt, orange shorts, and a green hat—you're a bunch of carrots. Then, be sure to serve the vegetable your youngster is wearing. He will definitely want to eat it!

### The name game

It's amazing what a few words can do. Call healthy foods by clever or funny names, and your youngster will be more apt to try them. In fact, studies have shown that children are twice as likely to eat healthy foods when they have amusing names. For instance, serve Shark Attack Salmon or Touchdown Turkey Tacos. *Idea:* Announce the name



ahead of time, and ask your child to decorate a menu card for the table.

### All about me

Relating healthy foods to your youngster's special interests can make all the difference. Is he fascinated with outer space? Arrange a fruit salad to look like the solar system, and offer him Mercury (a blueberry) or Jupiter (orange slices). Even better, have him help pick out the fruits and create the dish. If baseball is his passion, tape a picture of a player with a milk mustache to his glass of milk. Or serve a container of applesauce or yogurt in his catcher's mitt. ●

## Playground challenges

Help your child work up a sweat at the playground by heading there with specific activities in mind. Try these options.

**Follow the leader.** The challenge is to use every piece of equipment at least once. Your youngster could be the leader first, and then you can take a turn.

**Swing high.** Pump your legs five times to see how high you can go. Then try 10 times.

**Chase each other.** Have your child be "It" while you run around the perimeter of the playground. When she tags you, you're "It," and you have to catch her.

*Tip:* Double the fun by meeting another parent and child at the playground. Or let your youngster take along a friend. ●



# Dinner in a jiffy

You just got home from work. You're tired. The kids are hungry. How can you get dinner on the table quickly? A little advance planning and tips like these can help:

- Develop a repertoire of quick recipes. You could search online for "healthy three-ingredient recipes" or "healthy 10-minute recipes."



Save the recipes in a computer folder, or print and keep them in one easy-to-find place (a binder on your kitchen counter, clipped to your refrigerator).

- Each weekend, plan the meals you'll make in the coming week. You could ask each person for a suggestion (if there are four people in your family,

that takes care of four dinners). Try to include a meal that will cover two nights, such as baked chicken on Monday that can become chicken salad on Tuesday.

- Nothing delays dinner more than having to run to the store for an ingredient. Avoid that by reading recipes through ahead of time to make sure you have what you need. Also, be flexible. You can often substitute one vegetable or spice for another—and you might even prefer the new dish you create!

- Use shortcuts. You can get pre-cut, bagged vegetables or cut-up fruit from the salad bar at the grocery store. Making pasta? Buy (low-sodium) pasta sauce and (low-fat) grated cheese—all you'll need to do is boil the noodles and warm the sauce. ♥

## ACTIVITY CORNER

### I'm a yogi, you're a yogi!

Stand tall like a tree, stretch like a cobra, or make your body into a bridge. Doing yoga together is a great way to build your child's strength and coordination—and his confidence. Begin by holding each pose for 10 seconds, and work up to 30 seconds or more.

**Be a tree.** Standing straight, shift your weight onto your right leg, and bring your left foot up so it rests below or above your right knee (but not on your knee). Raise your arms up high like the branches on a tree. Repeat on the other side.



**Be a cobra.** Lie stomach down with your palms flat and under your shoulders. Press into your palms, and lift your head and chest up (your lower body stays on the floor).

**Be a bridge.** Lie on your back with your knees bent (feet hip-width apart) and arms by your sides. Press into your feet, and lift your hips up. Reach toward your ankles with your arms. ♥



## IN THE KITCHEN

### Crazy for cauliflower

There are so many ways to use a head of cauliflower! Consider these suggestions for cooking with cauliflower, a good source of vitamin C, potassium, and other nutrients.

*The basics:* With a knife, cut off the core and leaves. Let your child break the cauliflower into *florets* (or small pieces that look like flowers). Rinse under cool running water. Or you can use frozen cauliflower.

**Pizza crust.** Microwave the florets until tender, and puree in a blender or food processor. Combine 1 cup pureed cauliflower with 1 egg, 1 cup shredded skim mozzarella cheese, and 1 tsp. oregano. Press the mixture onto a greased cookie sheet. Bake at 450° for 12–15 minutes. To make your pizza, add marinara sauce, toppings, and cheese. Broil until hot.



**Roast.** Spread cauliflower pieces in a single layer on a baking sheet. Drizzle with a little olive oil. Bake at 350° until tender, stirring occasionally (30–45 minutes).

**"Mashed potatoes."** Microwave florets 6–8 minutes, and puree. Mix with  $\frac{1}{2}$  cup fat-free milk, 1 tbsp. butter, and freshly ground pepper. Stir until smooth.

*Tip:* To add extra nutrients to everyday dishes, cook cauliflower, and chop into small pieces. Then, layer them into lasagna, or stir into soups, stews, or macaroni and cheese. ♥

## OUR PURPOSE

To provide busy parents with practical ways to promote healthy nutrition and physical activity for their children.

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