

Nutrition Nuggets

Food and Fitness for a Healthy Child

February 2010

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Morris Educational Foundation

BEST BITES



Healthier cereal

Is it hard to get your youngster to switch from her favorite—but not so healthy—cereal? Try mixing it with a more nutritious variety, half and half, in the same bowl (frosted mini wheat squares with unfrosted). As she gets used to the new taste, gradually decrease the portion of the sugary type.



DID YOU KNOW?

The average child gets less than 15 minutes a day of vigorous physical activity. Help your youngster achieve the recommended 60 minutes every day by keeping track. Hang a calendar on the kitchen wall, and have each person write in the physical activities they did that day (walked the dog, played football).

Buy food in bulk

Try to buy food and supplies (canned goods, napkins) in larger quantities when possible. You'll save money and also help the environment by cutting down on packaging waste. When bulk quantities are too big for your family, consider splitting the food—and the cost—with relatives or neighbors.

Just for fun

Mom: Lauren, the salad doesn't taste right. Are you sure you washed the lettuce?

Lauren: Of course, Mom. You can still see some soap on it!



Table time

Eating together can build family bonds and encourage your child to eat more nutritiously. Use these ideas to spell better m-e-a-l-s for your family.

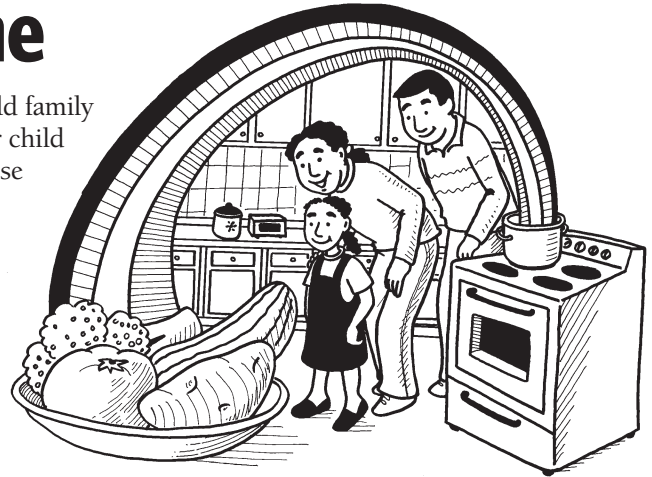
Make it a habit. Having meals together as often as possible will get everyone in the routine. Try to set mealtimes that work for your family, which may mean late dinners after soccer practice or early breakfasts before work and school.

Enjoy a variety of foods. Think of the week as a rainbow, and serve a different-colored vegetable each night: red tomatoes, orange carrots, green broccoli, and so on. Mix up your main courses, too, rotating among chicken, beef, pork, fish, and a meatless meal, for example.

Add fun. Keep things playful with special-event meals. You might throw an indoor picnic (spread a blanket or sheet on the family room floor) or have a "silly hat dinner" (family members wear hats they made or decorated). Use the event to spark conversation. ("What a great hat. How did you think of it?")

Let kids help. Mealtime is easier when everyone has a job. Your youngster might set the table, make the salad, fill glasses with water, or plan a menu. If she participates, she'll be more interested in sitting down to eat the meal.

Say please and thank you. Practice good manners—and keep mealtime pleasant—by setting a few simple rules. (Examples: Use indoor voices. Ask others to pass food.) Good manners at home will carry over into the school cafeteria and the homes of friends and relatives.



Tip: Keep the focus on your family at mealtime by turning off the TV and leaving cell phones and handheld video games in another room. ♥

Add steps

Walking extra steps is an easy way to build more exercise into your youngster's day. Here are some suggestions.

Go for walks. Take daily walks, even in the winter. Dress warmly, wearing hats, mittens, and layers of clothing. Walk up hills in your neighborhood instead of around them.

Take the long way. If you're walking your child to a friend's house, go a block out of your way. If you're shopping, take a longer route from one store to another. When you park, pick a space at the back of the lot so everyone has to walk farther. ♥

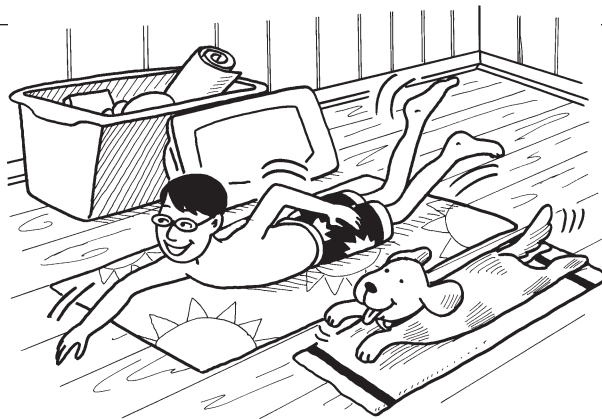


My exercise kit

Encourage your youngster to get more physical activity by putting together his own special equipment. Store items in a big container (a storage bin, a clean trash can), and suggest a few activities for each.

Item: Large towel

Activities: Lie down on your stomach and pretend to swim. Stand up and pretend you're balancing on a surfboard. Or roll up the towel, put it on the floor, and jump back and forth "over the log."



Item: Exercise mat

Activities: Pretend that your nose or your elbow is a pencil, and spell your name with it. Do movement patterns (forward roll, hop, hop, backward roll). Try a yoga pose: get on your hands and knees and stretch like a cat (arch your back and sink back down). ●

Item: Different-sized balls
Activities: Toss the balls into the equipment bin from various spots in a room. Practice dribbling by bouncing a ball low and then high. Lie down on your back with your knees bent and your feet on a large ball—use your feet to roll the ball back and forth.

ACTIVITY CORNER

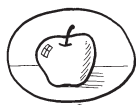
Food sense

Touch it. Taste it. Smell it. Let your child use his senses to explore food with these ideas.

Touch. Put several fruits and vegetables in a paper bag or pillowcase. Have your youngster reach in and try to identify each one by how it feels (bumpy, smooth, soft, hard, round, oblong).

Taste. Set out foods that are sweet (jelly beans), sour (pickles), salty (pretzels), and bitter (grapefruit peels). Explain to your child that there are taste buds for different flavors on different parts of his tongue. Then, have him touch each food to different areas on his tongue. Can he find the parts that correspond with each flavor? *Hint:* The taste will be stronger when it touches the "right" taste buds.

Smell. Have your youngster repeat the tasting experiment, but this time he should hold his nose. What happens? He'll learn that food doesn't taste the same when he can't smell it—which is why food isn't as good when he has a cold. ●



IN THE KITCHEN

Leftover magic

Using leftovers can stretch food dollars—and help busy families get meals on the table. Here are some ideas:

- For a quick pasta primavera, boil noodles and warm a jar of marinara sauce. Toss with last night's cooked vegetables.
- Make Sloppy Joes. Shred leftover beef, simmer it in barbecue sauce, and serve on whole-wheat buns.
- Cut leftover chicken into chunks, and combine with light mayonnaise. Put the chicken salad in sandwiches or on top of last night's salad.

- Slice up leftover steak, and heat it in a microwave. Place it in low-fat tortillas along with shredded lettuce and chopped tomatoes for steak wraps.

- Crumble up leftover hamburgers and mix with cooked brown rice. Cut a bell pepper in half, scoop out the seeds, and fill with the beef and rice. Cover with tomato sauce, and bake for 20 minutes at 350°.

Safety Note: Use leftovers within four days. ●



PARENT TO PARENT

Handling lactose intolerance

When we found out that our daughter Alicia was lactose intolerant, we were upset. She loves to drink milk and eat dairy products, but it turns out they were the cause of her stomach problems.

I talked to a neighbor who is lactose intolerant, and she gave me several ideas. First, we went food shopping to find things Alicia could have. We were surprised that our store had lactose-free milk, cheese, and even ice cream sandwiches. Then, we checked food labels for ingredients to avoid, such as lactose, whey, cream, dried milk, milk solids, and powdered milk. Our neighbor had

warned us that these ingredients are often added to bread, cereal, lunch meats, salad dressings, and cookie mixes.

Finally, we bought chewable lactase enzyme supplements for Alicia to use

when she didn't have substitutes, such as at a friend's birthday pizza party.

Alicia feels much better now that she's not eating foods with lactose—so she really doesn't mind the changes in her diet too much. ●



OUR PURPOSE

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

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