

# Nutrition Nuggets

Food and Fitness for a Healthy Child

January 2007

McAllen Independent School District  
Child Nutrition Department

## BEST BITES

### Shop and walk

The next time you go shopping with your child, sneak in some exercise. First, park the car far from the entrance so you have to walk farther to get inside. Then, do a lap or two inside the mall or around the grocery store before starting your errands.



### Staying healthy

With cold and flu season setting in, it's as important as ever to make sure your youngster eats well. Boost his

immunity with plenty of nutrient-rich fruits and

vegetables each day. Good choices include oranges, pink grapefruit, cantaloupe, sweet potatoes, tomatoes, and



broccoli.

### A fraction of fitness

There are 1,440 minutes in a day. Try to get your child to use 60 of them for physical activity. That's just 4 percent of your youngster's day, but it will make a 100 percent difference in her fitness level.

### DID YOU KNOW?

Many elementary schools serve breakfast. Having your child eat there will save you time in the morning—and ensure he's getting a healthy meal. Menus usually vary from day to day and

often include both hot and cold items.

Check with your school to

see if breakfast is offered.



## Snack success

Whether heading to an after-school program or straight home, kids are ready for a snack when the last school bell rings. And that's not the only time children snack—they actually get a quarter of their calories from the things they eat between meals! Try these ideas for after-school, after-dinner, or weekend snacking.



### Combine food groups

Help your youngster mix and match nutrients by eating snacks that combine the four food groups (grains, fruits and vegetables, dairy, meat and beans). Putting both a protein and a fruit or vegetable into a snack, for example, makes it even healthier than fruit alone.

*Ideas:* microwaved potato topped with broccoli and cheese; a banana mashed with peanut butter and spread on whole-grain bread. Remember, serving fat-free milk adds protein and dairy to any snack.

### Control the amount

Give your child snack-sized servings on a plate instead of putting out a whole bag of crackers. Or make grab-and-go portions: place snacks in small plastic bags, and leave them in the refrigerator or pantry. *Ideas:* one hard-boiled egg and a cluster of grapes;  $\frac{3}{4}$  cup whole-grain cereal and  $\frac{1}{4}$  cup dried cherries.

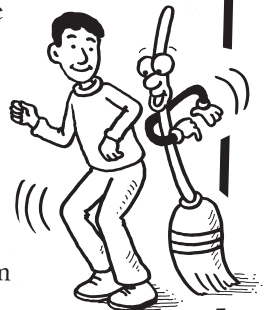
### Offer variety

Motivate your youngster to eat nutritious snacks by changing the choices. *Ideas:* hot oatmeal with sliced strawberries one day, rolled-up turkey and cheese slices the next, and "pizza" the next (top a whole-wheat English muffin with tomato sauce and shredded low-fat mozzarella cheese, and broil until cheese bubbles). ♥

## Active chores

Combine chores and physical activity, and your house will get clean while your youngster gets moving. Now that's a win-win solution! Here are some things your child can do...with a little help from you:

- Put away toys and games. *Tip:* Set a timer for 10 minutes, and challenge him to clear one area.
- Sweep the floors and vacuum the rugs.
- Clean out clothes drawers, and pack up clothes your youngster has outgrown.
- Shovel sidewalks or the driveway. Borrow an extra shovel from a neighbor, and work together.
- Sort dirty laundry into whites and colors. Put away the clean clothes. ♥



# If your child is overweight...

What can you do when you suspect your child's weight has crept into the unhealthy zone? Consult your pediatrician for an evaluation, and ask for her help in developing an eating plan. Then, use this four-step approach to guide your youngster.

**1 Be accepting.** Make sure your child knows you love him no matter what his weight is. A youngster who is loved and supported will be more likely to make positive changes.



**2 Be active.** To let him know that everyone needs exercise, make physical activity a family priority. At dinner, talk about what each person did that day (played soccer during recess, walked at lunch hour).

**3 Be helpful.** Keep plenty of fruits, vegetables, whole grains, lean meats, and fat-free milk in the house. Limit less-healthy items.

**4 Be supportive.** Applaud every step your child makes. Each time he exercises, or chooses fruit over candy, cheer him on. "Great job! I am proud of you for making healthy choices." *Note:* To help him feel good about himself, be sure to praise his actions rather than how he looks. ♥



## ACTIVITY CORNER

### Family fitness challenge

Ten activities in 10 minutes? Here's a fitness challenge that makes everyone a winner.

Start by brainstorming a list of

10 ideas. Then, help your youngster write them on a poster board, and tape it to the wall. Try to make this into a nightly fitness challenge, and you'll add 70 minutes of physical activity to your child's week.

These ideas can get your family started:

- 👉 Hop on one foot for 1 minute.
- 👉 Line up kitchen chairs in a row, and sit down and get up 10 times.
- 👉 Crawl on hands and knees across the room. Skip back.
- 👉 Move arms in big circles 10 times. Switch direction, and do 10 more circles.
- 👉 Put pillows on the floor and jump from one to another. ♥

## 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.

## PARENT TO PARENT

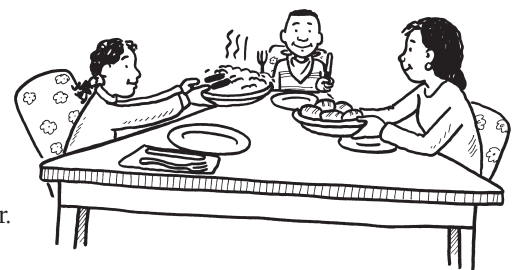
### Sunday brunch

Between work, soccer practice, and Cub Scout meetings, our lives had become so busy there was barely time for dinner together. So I came up with the idea of a regular Sunday brunch.

I told my children about the plan and asked for menu ideas. Pancakes, my son suggested. Scrambled eggs, my daughter said. We decided on a month of menus and agreed we would prepare the food together.

After just a few weeks, Sunday brunch has become a family tradition. We all look forward to a healthy meal—and each other's company!

Here's the recipe for one of our favorites, Cinnamon French Toast. Beat 2 eggs with 1 tsp. cinnamon and 1 tsp. sugar. Dip 4 slices of whole-grain bread in the mixture. In a pan coated with nonstick spray, sauté until crisp. ♥



## IN THE KITCHEN

### Mexican food fiesta

Kids everywhere love Mexican food. In fact, next to pizza, it's the most popular choice in many school cafeterias. Serve up these healthy versions at home.

**Chips and salsa.** Brush whole-wheat tortillas with canola oil, and cut into six wedges. Place on a baking sheet, and sprinkle lightly with chili powder. Bake until crisp, about 8 minutes at 400°. Serve with salsa.

**Cheese quesadilla.** Put shredded low-fat Monterey Jack cheese between two corn tortillas. Brown in a sauté pan (coated with nonstick cooking spray) until cheese melts.

**Chicken fajitas.** Coat skillet with olive oil spray, and sauté boneless, skinless chicken strips 3–4 minutes. Remove chicken, and add sliced onion and green pepper. Cook 5 minutes. Return chicken to pan, add pinch of salt and pepper, and toss for 1 minute. Spoon onto tortillas, top with diced tomatoes and shredded lettuce, and roll up. ♥

