

# Nutrition Nuggets

Food and Fitness for a Healthy Child

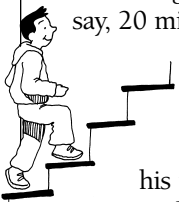
February 2007

McAllen Independent School District  
Child Nutrition Department

## BEST BITES

### Homework break

Consider letting your youngster take an activity break during homework time. After, say, 20 minutes of work, have him walk up and down the stairs a few times or do 10 jumping jacks. The movement will help keep his mind active—and build up daily exercise time.



### Fish tale

Try to serve fish to your children at least twice a week. You'll lower their risk for obesity and heart disease. Oily fish, such as salmon, albacore tuna, and halibut, is especially healthy because it has more omega-3 fatty acids. Fish is also a good source of protein.

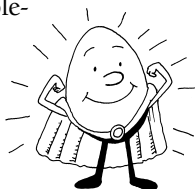


### Picture this!

"Look! That's me on the balance beam!" Support your child's active pursuits by displaying pictures of her playing sports, dancing, or tumbling. Snap pictures during games, recitals, and backyard play. Then, put the photos around the house to show your youngster that you value physical activity.

### DID YOU KNOW?

Eggs give your child the most protein for the least calories—and least cost—of perhaps any food. Plus, they are packed with many nutrients, including vitamin D, B<sub>12</sub>, folate, iron, and antioxidants. Try scrambled eggs tucked into a whole-wheat pita pocket for a fun and healthy breakfast.



## Crazy about calcium

Does your youngster get enough calcium each day? As children get older, they need more of this important mineral. Spell good health for your child with this guide:

**C**hildren need lots of calcium to build strong bones. From ages 4 to 8, they should have 800 mg of calcium a day; youngsters ages 9–18 need 1,300 mg daily.

**A**t school, make sure your youngster drinks milk with breakfast and lunch. Encourage him to choose fat-free milk—he can even make it chocolate or strawberry. No matter what type of milk your child drinks, one serving delivers 300 mg of calcium.

**L**ook for foods with added calcium. Your grocery store probably carries calcium-fortified orange juice, cereals, breads, English muffins, and instant oatmeal.

**C**heck nutrition labels on food packages to find items that are high in calcium. Look for 20% or more DV (daily value) of calcium.

**I**f your child is allergic to regular milk or is lactose-intolerant, you have other choices. Lactose-free milk and calcium-enriched soy milk and rice milk are excellent sources of calcium, too.



**U**nderstand which foods besides milk are rich in calcium: cheese, yogurt, broccoli, spinach, kale, collard greens, white beans, baked beans, pinto beans, sweet potatoes, oranges, papaya, salmon, almonds, and tofu.

**M**ost children's vitamins don't have all the calcium that kids need. Talk to your pediatrician about ways to boost the amount of calcium in your youngster's diet and adding supplements if necessary. ♥

## Know your ingredients

Help your child eat better by knowing what's in the food you buy. Here are some easy ways to scan ingredient lists:

- Watch out for words you can't pronounce or items you've never heard of. They are likely to be chemicals or artificial ingredients.
- Know that added sugar goes by many names, including dextrose, fructose, glucose, and high-fructose corn syrup.
- Choose foods with the word "whole" before grains, such as whole wheat or whole oats.

*Remember:* Ingredients are listed according to amount, from most to least. So, if sugar is the first ingredient listed, that means the item has more sugar than anything else. ♥



# Reach for the goal

The Walkers decided it was time for a change. They needed to be more active, and so did their children. Here's how they started a family exercise program. Consider borrowing their ideas for your family.

## Set goals

"We decided to begin with 30 minutes of physical activity every other day. We wanted to work up to an hour a day within 3 months."

## Think of activities

"We sat down together to come up with things everyone could do. We plan to have a family meeting each month to brainstorm new ideas."



## Make a plan

"We wrote down our program: 'Friday, go ice skating. Sunday, play in the park.' We do different activities every week to keep the kids—and us—interested."

## Keep track

"We made an exercise chart and put it on the refrigerator. We wrote the days of the week down the left side and our names across the top. After we finish exercising, we each mark our box. Jennifer draws a smiley face, Jeff signs his name, and my wife and I write our initials." ♥



## ACTIVITY CORNER

### Act it out!

Everyone knows that reading is good for the mind. With this fun activity, you can make it good for the body, too!

Start by helping your child pick out a few favorite books from the library or her own collection. Look for books with lots of action words, such as "dance," "hop," "run," or "jump."



Read one of the books to your youngster. Then, read it again slowly, and have her act out the story as you go.

For instance, read *Hop on Pop* by Dr. Seuss. Your child can jump up when you read, "Up, pup," or crouch down small when you say, "Mouse on house." Suggest that she use props, too. Example: Read *Jack and the Beanstalk*. She can climb on a chair when Jack climbs the beanstalk, and then jump down and run away when Jack does. ♥

## IN THE KITCHEN

### Noodle magic

What child doesn't love pasta? Offer your youngster these tasty meals, and he'll get a healthy variety of grains, vegetables, and protein.



**Pizza in a dish:** Mix together 1 lb. cooked multi-grain spaghetti, 1 jar spaghetti sauce (26 oz.), 1 lb. cooked lean ground beef, 1 cup sliced mushrooms, and 2 cups grated mozzarella cheese. Season with 1 tsp. each of oregano, thyme, and basil. Pour into a 13 x 9 inch baking dish (coated with nonstick spray), and bake at 375° for 20 minutes.

**Tuna pasta salad:** Cook a box of macaroni. Drain and toss with a large can or bag of tuna, 1 cup of peas, a diced red pepper, and low-fat ranch dressing to taste.

*Tip:* When making pasta, try different shapes and flavors. Kids may like fusilli (spirals), wheels, and ziti (tubes), and even green (spinach) and red (tomato) pasta. ♥

## Q & A Say no to trans fat

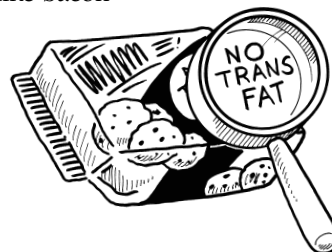
**Q:** I keep reading about trans fat. What is it, and why isn't it good for my children?

**A:** Trans-fatty acids (known as trans fats, hydrogenated fats, or partially hydrogenated fats) are made by adding hydrogen to liquid vegetable oil. Eating trans fats clogs arteries—like bacon grease clogs your kitchen sink—and can cause heart disease. These fats raise total cholesterol and also lower the "good cholesterol" that helps prevent heart problems.

Food companies started using trans fats because they give products a longer shelf life. The good news is that some are eliminating them because of the health risks.

Look for packages marked "no trans fats," or check the trans fat line on food labels—0% is best!

Foods most likely to have trans fats include potato chips, crackers, cookies, microwave popcorn, donuts, margarine, and vegetable shortening. ♥



## OUR PURPOSE

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

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