

# Nutrition Nuggets

Food and Fitness for a Healthy Child

March 2007

McAllen Independent School District  
Child Nutrition Department

## BEST BITES



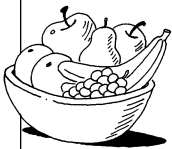
### Run for a cause

Combine physical activity and community service by walking or running with your child in a charity event. Together, look in your newspaper for listings of walks and runs. The entrance fee goes to the charity, and the energy boost goes to you and your youngster.



### Front and center

Make a fresh fruit bowl the centerpiece of your kitchen table, and you'll find your kids reaching for a healthy snack more often. Choose colorful fruits like bananas, grapes, and different varieties of apples and pears. When summer arrives, you can add juicy peaches, plums, and nectarines.

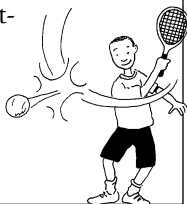


### Family outings

The next time you set off for a family day out, whether to a museum or a park, take nutritious foods along. That will keep your child from being tempted by junk food at snack bars. You could pack sandwiches (with an ice pack), sliced cucumbers, cantaloupe chunks, and low-fat granola bars.

### DID YOU KNOW?

Doing weight-bearing exercise will strengthen your youngster's bones and muscles. Weight bearing doesn't have to include using weights—it means any activity where your child's legs carry his weight. So get him playing softball, basketball, tennis, or soccer. Or encourage dancing, running, walking, and stair climbing.



## Taming the TV

Jamie likes to watch television all afternoon. Her mom would like her to be active, but she's not sure how to get her away from the TV. Sound familiar? Here are some ideas.

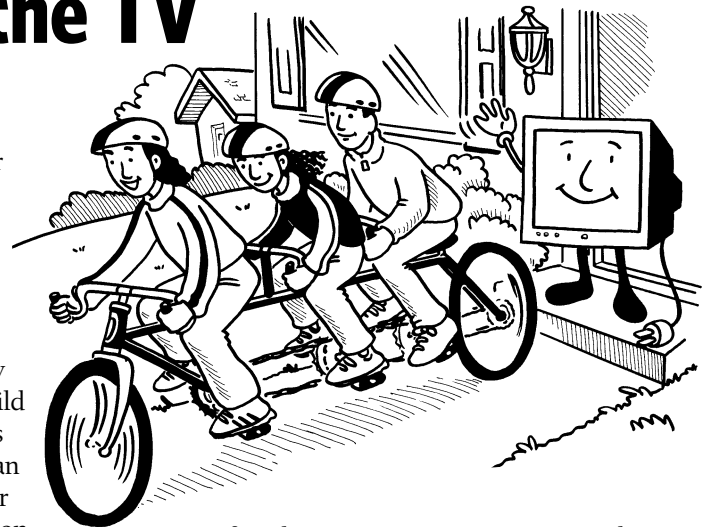
**Set limits.** Decide how much television your child can watch. *Note:* Experts recommend no more than an hour a day. Have your youngster keep a television log so you'll both know when she has reached her limit.

**Map it out.** On Sunday, review the week's television listings together. Help your child decide on shows. You can keep the schedule flexible. If she wants to watch an extra show

Thursday, she can swap for a program planned for Friday. *Activity idea:* Have your youngster do quick exercises (sit-ups, touching her toes) during commercials.

**Cut back.** Have a television set only in the family room. That will help you monitor how much your child watches. Also, try not to use television shows as a reward. Instead, offer extra playtime for a job well done.

**Turn it off.** Have a family "no-TV time"



after dinner so your youngster can do homework, read, and play active games. Try making television a smaller part of family life. Keep it off during meals—have family discussions instead—and don't schedule family events around programs. Also, avoid leaving the TV on as "background noise." ●

## Who's watching?

Why are more children overweight today? One big reason is the amount of television they watch. While in front of the TV, youngsters aren't exercising, and they're often snacking. Consider these facts:

- The typical child in America spends more time watching television than doing anything else besides sleeping.
- Watching television burns fewer calories than almost any other activity a youngster can do.
- Three out of four sixth-graders have televisions in their bedrooms. In 1970, just 6 percent of children that age had their own TV.
- The average child watches 40,000 television commercials each year. Many of them are for soda and junk foods. ●



# Fresh from the garden

**Teacher:** Where does lettuce come from?

**Child:** The store.

Help your youngster learn where vegetables really come from by planting a family garden. The bonus? Your child will be excited about eating the food he grows, and he'll be more likely to eat his veggies.

**Step 1: Planting.** Start with vegetables that grow quickly, so your youngster will see fast results. Try radishes, which take



only a month, and zucchini, green peppers, and green beans (two months). Other easy-to-grow crops are tomatoes, cucumbers, and peas. Carrots and potatoes are fun, too—they grow underground, so your child will get to dig in the dirt for them.

**Step 2: Eating.** Your youngster will probably gobble up cherry tomatoes, green beans, and peas straight from the garden. When you go inside, slice radishes,

peppers, cucumbers, and carrots, and let your

child dip them in low-fat dressing. Serve his homegrown vegetables with dinner, and watch his face glow with pride!

**Note:** Children without yards can still garden. Let them plant seeds in pots and place them near a sunny window. ♡

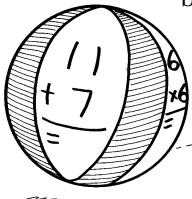
## ACTIVITY CORNER

### Math moves

What's more fun than doing a math worksheet? Solving math problems as part of a game! Try these active ideas.

#### 1. Beach Ball Toss

Write a math problem on each section of an inflatable beach ball (use a washable marker). *Examples:*  $11 + 7 = \underline{\quad}$ ,  $6 \times 6 = \underline{\quad}$ ,  $9 - \underline{\quad} = 2$ . Then, toss the ball to your child. When she catches it, she has to solve a problem and throw the ball back to you. Keep tossing the ball until she has done all the equations. Wipe off the problems, write new ones, and play again.



#### 2. Number Chase

Call out numbers, and challenge your youngster to find matching objects. If you say four, she could grab a rollerblade (four wheels). Say six, and she could get six socks. Set a kitchen timer to make the game more fun—and get her moving! ♡

## PARENT TO PARENT

### Schedule in exercise

I knew my boys needed more physical activity time. But with a baby girl and two elementary school children, how could I fit it in? So I brainstormed with my friend Pam, who is in the same situation, and here's what we came up with.

First, I started putting the baby in a stroller after school and taking all three kids for a walk. Then, Pam and I decided we would watch each other's babies one afternoon a week to give ourselves active time with our older kids. On my turn last week, I took the boys to the playground. Next week, we're planning a nature walk through the state park. Finally, Pam and I found a basketball clinic at the community center that's perfect for our older kids. Now, we can share the driving, and the boys can improve their game. ♡



## IN THE KITCHEN

### Healthy food-on-a-stick

Put healthy foods on a skewer for your child's next snack or meal—and watch all that healthy food disappear! For extra fun, let your youngster help you prepare these simple recipes.

**Fruit & Cheese.** Alternate strawberries, pineapple chunks, and grapes with cubes of low-fat cheddar and Monterey Jack cheese.

Try using thin pretzel sticks as the skewer.

**Tortellini Treat.** Cook low-fat cheese tortellini

according to package directions. Put them on wooden skewers with grape tomatoes, cubes of skim mozzarella cheese, olives, and canned artichoke hearts.

**Chicken-Veggie.** Cut boneless, skinless chicken breasts into 1-inch cubes. Thread onto metal skewers along with whole mushrooms

and cut-up red and green peppers. Brush with low-fat Italian dressing, and bake at 350° for 20 minutes, turning once. ♡



## OUR PURPOSE

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

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