

Nutrition Nuggets

Food and Fitness for a Healthy Child

February 2009

McAllen Independent School District



BEST BITES

Peanut butter substitute

If your child is allergic to peanut butter or her school has a peanut-free policy, try these alternatives: sunflower seed butter, soy nut butter, or cashew butter. Any of them will give her the taste of a peanut butter and jelly sandwich. You can find these products in grocery or health food stores.



Simon says "hop"

Combine exercise and fun with this active version of Simon Says. The leader calls out directions like "hop on one foot,"

"march in place," or "stretch up high"—with or without "Simon Says." Follow the commands only when you hear "Simon Says," or you're out!

DID YOU KNOW?

Canned tomato sauce, pasta sauces, and soups vary widely in nutritional content. When you're grocery shopping, let your youngster help you check food labels for the lowest sodium and sugar and the highest vitamin levels. He'll practice reading labels, and your family will have healthier meals.



Just for fun

Q: What's the hardest thing about learning to rollerblade?

A: The ground.



Spring activities ahead!

It may be cold outside, but warm weather will be here before you know it. Use this four-step plan to help your child choose a sport that he will enjoy this spring.

1. Discuss. Start by talking about what he likes. How does he usually spend recess (playing soccer, climbing on the jungle gym)? Which sports does he watch or read about? Would he rather be on a team, take a class, or do something on his own? Together, make a list of possible activities.

2. Research. Check on programs at your school, community center, local sports leagues, or YMCA. See how class, practice, or game times would fit into your family's schedule. Ask specific questions, such as: "How many kids are on the team?" "Do all children get to participate no matter what their skills are?"

3. Evaluate. Think about your youngster's personality and abilities. A social child might enjoy a team sport, while



a quieter one may prefer a class or an individual sport. If your child is still developing basic skills (throwing, kicking), consider a noncompetitive program—one where they don't keep score or have playoffs.

4. Support. Try to make sure your youngster attends practices and games. Lend a hand if you can, and cheer on all the kids. Talk about the fun of the activity, and downplay winning or losing. If your child knows that the goal is to be fit and have a great time, he'll feel good about himself. ♥

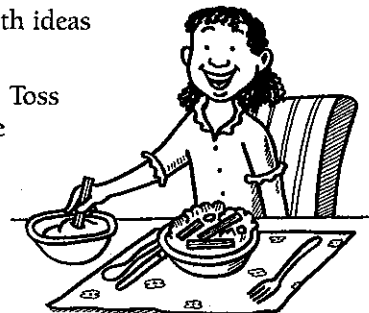
Salad days

Get your youngster to eat salad more often with ideas like these.

Add crunch. Kids like to bite into crunchy foods. Toss thinly sliced radishes, raw green beans, and grape halves with crisp romaine lettuce pieces.

Use color. Attract your child to the salad bowl with bright orange carrot slices, shredded red cabbage, and diced yellow bell peppers.

Dip it. Put a small bowl of low-fat salad dressing alongside her salad. Dipping salad pieces will limit the dressing she uses and make eating more fun. *Note:* Try kid favorites like ranch, Italian, or French dressing. ♥



Bring it home

Take-out food can be a quick solution for a hectic dinnertime. Make it a *healthy* solution by showing your child these ways to choose wisely from carryout menus.

Italian

- Put healthier toppings (vegetables, low-fat cheese) on pizza, and order thin-crust rather than deep-dish.
- Try minestrone soup for a serving of beans and vegetables.
- Get pasta dishes with tomato sauce rather than cream sauce.



Chinese

- Choose steamed or lightly stir-fried dishes instead of ones that are battered or deep-fried like General Tso's chicken, sweet and sour pork, and orange beef.
 - Look for items that have a lot of vegetables, such as chop suey or moo goo gai pan.
 - Select steamed dumplings and brown rice rather than fried versions.
- Tip:* Ask for low-sodium soy sauce.

Indian

- Try mulligatawny, a lentil-and-vegetable soup.
- For entrees, order baked or roasted dishes like shish kebab, tandoori chicken or fish, or saag (for example, beef with spinach). Stay away from rich curries made with coconut milk or cream.
- Ask for mango chutney—a sweet side order made from fruit that your youngster can put on meats, vegetables, or rice. ●



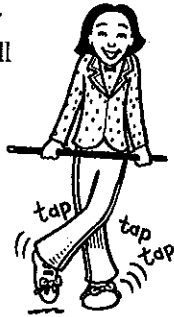
ACTIVITY CORNER

Sing along, dance along

Whether your youngster likes to sing, rap, or dance, you can use her love of music to get the whole family moving. Try these ideas:

- Turn on the radio or put on favorite CDs, and dance to the music. See who can keep moving for the longest time. Teach your child some old dances, and let her show you new ones.

- Homemade tap shoes will really get your youngster moving! Get two metal washers and thread a piece of string through each one. Lay one flat against the bottom of each shoe, and tie the string securely on top of the shoe. For extra fun, make tap shoes for yourself, and tap dance together on the sidewalk or in the basement or garage.



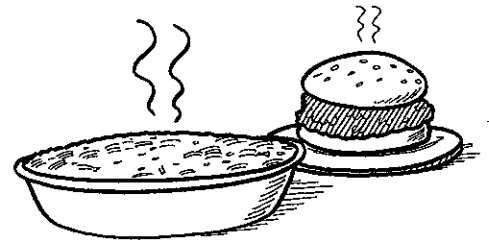
- Using a real or pretend microphone (try an empty toilet paper roll), your child can belt out a song and move to the tune. You might write the words on a poster board and let her sing along karaoke-style. ●

IN THE KITCHEN

Meaty dishes

Meat packs healthy protein, iron, and vitamins. Use lean ground meat for these two kid-pleasing dishes.

Sloppy Joes. Saute 1 lb. ground beef with 1 diced onion and 2 cups chopped fresh mushrooms. Cook until the onion and mushrooms are soft, 8–10 minutes, and drain. Stir in a 15-oz. can diced tomatoes and 2 tbsp. flour. Then, add ¼ cup water, 2 tbsp. apple cider vinegar, and ½ cup ketchup. Cook 10 minutes until the sauce thickens. Spoon onto whole-wheat buns.



Burger Pie. Brown 1 lb. ground turkey with ¼ cup diced onions, and drain off any fat. Stir in 1 small can tomato sauce, 1 tsp. chili powder, and salt and pepper to taste. Pour into a pie dish, and cover with 1 cup shredded low-fat cheddar cheese. Bake at 375° until the cheese melts, about 10 minutes. ●

Q & A Cutting back

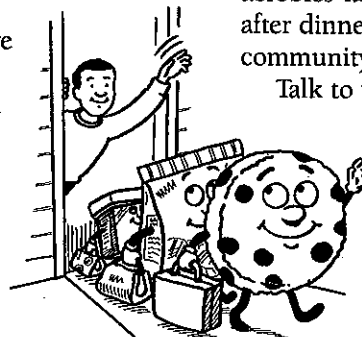
Q: *Our family is trying to lose weight, but we're having trouble sticking to a plan. How can we be more successful?*

A: One of the easiest ways is to watch what you have in the house. If you don't have cookies and chips in the pantry or ice cream in the freezer, you won't eat them.

Also, try to control what you'll eat when you go out. For example, don't take extra money for food

when you go to the movies or bowling alley. Instead, have a healthy meal or snack before leaving. Also, be sure to build in daily exercise like following an aerobics tape together, taking a walk after dinner, or swimming at an indoor community pool.

Talk to your child's pediatrician and your own doctor, and set healthy weight-loss goals for each of you. Then, celebrate your successes with a family outing—maybe to an ice-skating rink or a sporting event. ●



OUR PURPOSE

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

Resources for Educators,
a division of Aspen Publishers, Inc.
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www.rfeonline.com

Nutrition Nuggets is reviewed by a registered dietitian. Consult a physician before beginning any major change in diet or exercise.
ISSN 1935-4630