

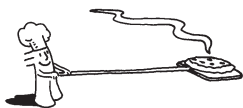
Nutrition Nuggets

Food and Fitness for a Healthy Child

February 2011

Fairfield Public Schools

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BEST BITES

Name that food

Would your child rather eat “egg canoes” than hard-boiled eggs? Or “upside-down umbrellas” instead of mushrooms? Giving playful names to nutritious foods can encourage him to try them. Let your youngster join in the fun, too. List five healthy foods, and have him invent a new name for each one.

An activity a week



Plan one physical activity as a family each week. You might set aside Saturday mornings or Sunday afternoons as your “family fit time.” Rotate activities, taking everyone’s favorites into account and also introducing new ideas. *Examples:* hiking, indoor climbing, backyard volleyball.

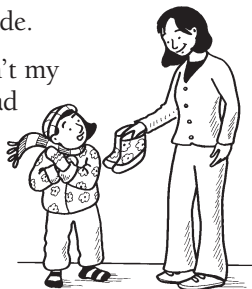
DID YOU KNOW?

Children as young as seven years old can be at risk for heart disease if they have high cholesterol. Celebrate American Heart Month this month by visiting your family doctor to check everyone’s cholesterol levels. Then, take steps (eat a healthier diet, exercise more) to bring down levels or keep them in a healthy range.

Just for fun

Mom: Here are your boots for playing outside.

Lexi: Those aren’t my boots—mine had snow on them!



Turning off the TV

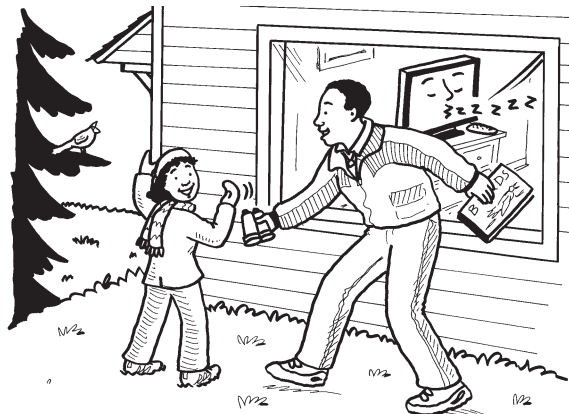
Too much time in front of a TV is a triple whammy for children: they’re not active, they tend to snack, and they’re bombarded with ads for sugary foods. Here are ways to tame the television habit in your house.

Find alternatives

Kids often watch TV because they can’t think of anything else to do. Together, brainstorm active alternatives (practice cartwheels, throw a Frisbee around). Write each suggestion on a slip of paper, and put the slips in a jar. Place the jar by the television, and have your youngster reach for an idea instead of the remote!

Make a schedule

Each Sunday, decide on the shows your family will watch in the coming week, and post the schedule. Then, turn the set on when the show starts, and turn it off when it’s over. That can help break a habit of surfing channels to find the next thing to watch. *Idea:* Cut down on screen time—and on commercials



watched—by taping shows and fast-forwarding through commercials.

Be a participant

Try to get your child used to *doing*, rather than *watching*, activities. For instance, if she usually turns on basketball games, have her shoot hoops outside instead. If she likes nature documentaries, visit the zoo or take binoculars outdoors and look for birds. Instead of viewing a game show, play a game. Your youngster will find that it can be much more fun to do an activity herself than to watch other people do it.

Note: Try to limit television to an hour a day. ♥

Pantry secrets

Having a stocked pantry makes it easier to put together healthy meals on busy days. Consider these suggestions:

- For one week, jot down the ingredients you need for everyday meals. Take the list when you go grocery shopping, and pick up those items.
- Avoid being out of something you “always” have (flour, milk) by tacking a sticky note to the refrigerator and jotting down items when you’re getting low on them.
- Shop once a month for pantry staples. Consider these categories: canned goods (beans, vegetables, soup, seafood, fruit); nut butters and jam; baking products; spices and dried herbs; whole-grain cereal, pasta, and rice; oils (olive, canola); and vinegars (white, balsamic). ♥



I made it myself!

When your child is hungry, encourage him to fix a bite for himself. He'll become comfortable in the kitchen as he learns to prepare healthy snacks. Try these steps:

- Talk about nutritious ingredients like fruit, vegetables, whole grains, and dairy products. Together, write down snack ideas, such as fruit salad, a turkey sandwich, a microwave-baked potato, or grape tomatoes and cheese cubes on a skewer. You can also look online or in cookbooks for fun



snacks like “banana balls” (mash a banana, mix in ½ cup chunky peanut butter, form into balls, and roll them in crushed nuts, low-fat granola, or coconut).

- Show your youngster how to handle tools like measuring spoons, a colander, and a can opener. Explain the rules (*example*: he needs supervision for using the stove, microwave, or knives).

Tip: Go over clean-up time, too.

- Encourage him to be creative. Make sure he knows that cooks don't always have to follow recipes. Your child can mix and match healthy ingredients to make food that is truly his own. ●

PARENT TO PARENT

Graphing nutrition goals

I was having trouble getting my son to eat enough vegetables. When he told me that his class had graphed favorite pizza toppings in math, I thought, why not have Austin graph the vegetables he eats?

I suggested a goal of three servings a day. On a small poster board, he wrote the days of the week across the bottom and the numbers 0–5 going up the left column. Each time he ate a serving of vegetables, he colored in a box for that day. At the end of the week, he could see how he had done.



The first week, Austin had one or two servings a day. I'm hoping he'll be able to color in more boxes this week. Graphing is a great way to work toward our nutrition goals—and it gives Austin a way to practice math, too. ●

IN THE KITCHEN

Fold and cook

Here's a simple formula for delicious meals: Place ingredients on aluminum foil, fold and tightly seal the foil, and bake. For each portion, use a large piece of heavy-duty aluminum foil.

Chicken. Top foil with 1-inch chunks of boneless, skinless chicken breasts, sliced apples, and sliced pears. Drizzle on honey-mustard salad dressing, and season with garlic salt and pepper. Bake at 350° until chicken is cooked thoroughly (about 20 minutes).

Fish. Place 1 fish fillet (red snapper, halibut, cod) on foil. Add diced tomato



and onion, black olive halves, and a little thyme. Cook at 450° about 20–25 minutes, until fish flakes when tested with a fork.

Beef. Put a hamburger patty, sliced carrots, and cubed potatoes on foil. Bake at 375° for 20 minutes, or until meat is completely cooked.

Note: These packets can also be cooked on a barbecue grill. ●

ACTIVITY CORNER

Bundled-up fun

Whether it's snowy or sunny (or both), your child can get healthy exercise with games like these.

On snowy days...

- Build and decorate a snowman, but leave off its hat. Mark a line 10 feet away, and take turns trying to toss a hat on its head.

- Make colored ice cubes (fill an ice cube tray with water, add drops of food coloring, and freeze). Hide the cubes in the snow, and run around to find them.



On any day...

- Move like cold-climate animals. Mark start and finish lines. Call out an animal's name, and players race to the finish line waddling like a penguin, “swimming” like a seal, or lumbering like a polar bear.

- Play a game of grass hockey with a small foam ball and child-sized hockey sticks or small brooms. Or take turns shooting goals: one person is the goalie, while the other person tries to score. ●

OUR PURPOSE

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

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