

# Nutrition Nuggets

Food and Fitness for a Healthy Child

November 2009

Rockwall Independent School District  
Mrs. Julie Farris, Food Nutrition Director

**BEST BITES**

## Try this!

Can't get your child to eat vegetables? Try this cauliflower side dish that tastes like mashed potatoes. Break a cauliflower head into pieces and microwave until tender, 4–6 minutes. In a blender or food processor, combine

the pieces with  $\frac{1}{2}$  cup fat-free milk, 1 tbsp. butter, and freshly ground pepper. Mix until smooth.



## Go for walks

Fall is a wonderful season for family walks. As you exercise together, encourage your child to notice changes in the season. You might set a goal for each walk, such as counting squirrels, pointing out completely bare trees, or spotting flocks of birds flying south.

## Nighttime reading

When you read to your youngster each night, add this piece: the school cafeteria menu. Together, look at the next day's selections, and help him pick his favorite healthy items. *Tip:* Be sure he has money in his cafeteria account, or tuck lunch money in his backpack.

## Just for fun

**Teacher:** If you had seven oranges in one hand and eight in the other, what would you have?

**Justin:** Really big hands!



## Super sandwiches

November 3 is National Sandwich Day—making this month the perfect time for your child to learn about healthy sandwiches. Here are some suggestions for throwing a month-long sandwich party.

**Menu board.** Have your youngster design a sandwich menu for your kitchen. On poster board, he can make rows for bread, meat, cheese, vegetables, and toppings. Help him brainstorm healthy items for each category, such as whole-grain breads (pita, English muffins, date bread, rolls) and low-fat toppings (honey mustard, ranch dressing). Then have him use his menu to make a grocery list.

**Fun shapes.** Encourage your child to be creative. He might make a “sushi sandwich” by rolling up a slice of whole-wheat bread with toppings (say, ricotta cheese, banana slices, and a drizzle of honey) and cutting it into sushi rolls. Or he could

build a snowman with bread cut into three different-size circles (use glasses or cookie cutters). Have him fill each sandwich with something different, arrange them on a plate, and decorate his snowman with raisins and pretzel sticks.

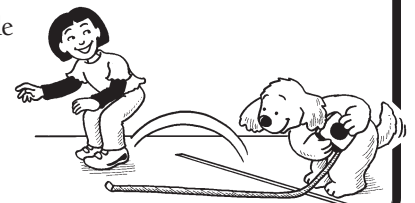
**My own sandwich.** Let your youngster design and name his own sandwich. He might make “Scott’s Scramble” (scrambled eggs and a tomato slice on whole-wheat cinnamon swirl bread) or “Scottie’s Salsa” (canned tuna mixed with salsa on rye bread). *Idea:* Have family members make up their own sandwiches and sample each other’s. ♥



## Get moving

Getting off the couch and moving around is as easy as 1-2-3 with these fun ideas:

1. Mark a line on a sidewalk or the basement floor, and take turns jumping from a standing-still position or with a running start. Measure the distances jumped, and record your “personal best.”
2. Play a balance game. While on your hands and knees, raise one arm or lift one knee for 10 seconds. Next, raise an opposite arm and a knee at the same time. Keep going until you run out of combinations.
3. Have your child bounce a medium-size ball while chanting the alphabet and matching names (“A is for Amy, B is for Brian,” and so on). On every name, she can swing her leg over the bouncing ball. Suggest that she play with cities and states, favorite foods, or anything else from A to Z! ♥



# Read all about it

Introduce your child to books about food. She'll enjoy a good story *and* learn about healthy eating.

- In *The Berenstain Bears and Too Much Junk Food* (Stan and Jan Berenstain), Mama Bear notices that Papa and the cubs are putting on weight. Have your youngster make a list of the healthy eating and exercise habits that the bears' doctor recommends. She can put a star by the ones she will try.



- *The Vegetables We Eat* (Gail Gibbons) takes readers on a nonfiction journey from farm to supermarket. Let your child pick vegetables from the book to buy and use in making soup. Help her fill a large pot with broth (beef, chicken, or vegetable), add a can of diced tomatoes, and stir in fresh vegetables (sliced or cubed). Cook on low heat for 45 minutes.

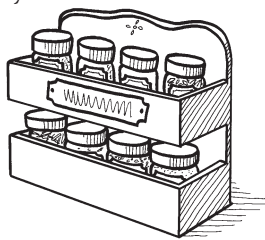
- Your youngster will find out all about tortillas in *The Tortilla Factory* by Gary Paulsen. Ask her to come up with ideas for tortilla meals in your home. *Examples:* grilled-cheese tortilla, refried beans or chili on a tortilla, "tortilla pie" (browned ground beef, tomato sauce, and shredded low-fat cheese between two tortillas). ♡

## Q & A

### Watch salt intake

**Q:** I was surprised when my son's doctor said his blood pressure was higher than it should be. The doctor recommended that we watch Joey's salt intake. What's the best way to do this?

**A:** Your son is not alone. Unfortunately, high blood pressure is more common among young people today. You can help by not buying salty foods like processed meats, chips, canned or boxed soups, frozen meals, or macaroni and cheese mixes. Also, limit fast food, Chinese food, and other carryout items that are high in sodium. Try to choose fresh foods and reduced-salt versions of ketchup, soy sauce, soup, or other items your child likes.



Your youngster will get all the sodium he needs in an everyday healthy diet, so keep the salt shaker in the cabinet at mealtime. If you cook with little or no salt, and he doesn't add more at the table, he will get used to eating that way. *Note:* Try flavoring foods with herbs and spices instead of salt. ♡



## IN THE KITCHEN

### Dip it

Did you ever notice how dipping makes food more fun? Your youngster can make her own dips with these yummy recipes.

**Vegetables.** Mix 1 small container plain yogurt with 1 tsp. dried dill and 1 tsp. dried parsley. Baby carrots, raw green beans, or celery stalks all make good "dippers."

**Fruit.** Combine 1 cup cottage cheese, 1 tbsp. frozen orange juice (thawed), ½ tsp. vanilla, and a pinch of cinnamon. *Dippers:* pineapple chunks, strawberries, bananas, cantaloupe cubes.

**Crackers.** Soften an 8-oz. package of cream cheese in a microwave. In a blender or food processor, combine the cream cheese with 15 oz. canned pumpkin, 1 tsp. cinnamon, and 1 tsp. ground ginger until smooth. *Dippers:* low-fat graham crackers, bagel chips, or ginger snaps.

*Note:* Teach children not to double dip, and make sure they rinse fresh vegetables and fruits before eating. ♡



## ACTIVITY CORNER

### Marching band

Your children can create homemade instruments that will have your family marching to the beat—and enjoying a workout in the process. Suggest that they start with these:

- Tape the lids shut on two empty oatmeal canisters, and then tape the two containers together into a bongo drum. Hold the drum with one hand, and beat with the other.

- Put uncooked rice into two clean, empty plastic bottles, and screw the tops on tightly. Shake them like maracas.

- Stretch rubber bands around a small, open box. Strum like a guitar.

Let each person choose an instrument to play. Then, put on upbeat music and play a musical version of Follow the Leader. Everyone moves like the leader (march with high knees, tiptoe through the living room). When the song ends, switch instruments and leaders, and start again. ♡



## 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