

# Nutrition Nuggets

Food and Fitness for a Healthy Child

September 2019



## BEST BITES

### Foods to sing about

Get your youngster excited about eating new foods by encouraging her to make up songs about them. She could pick a familiar tune (say, “Mary Had a Little Lamb”) and change the words to describe the food’s taste, color, texture, or scent. *Example:* “Mary had a roasted yam. It tasted sweet like jam.”

### Recess games

Head outside with your child, and teach him playground games you enjoyed at his age, such as freeze tag or capture the flag. He’ll discover new ways to be active at recess—and learn games to share with his classmates. *Idea:*



Ask him to show you a recess game that you’ve never played.

### DID YOU KNOW?

Nearly one in five children in the U.S. is obese. Since September is National Childhood Obesity Awareness Month, consider making a family pledge that will help everyone maintain a healthy weight. For instance, maybe you’ll agree to take walks after dinner and drink only water and fat-free milk.

### Just for fun

**Q:** What food has no beginning and no end?

**A:** A bagel.



## Table time

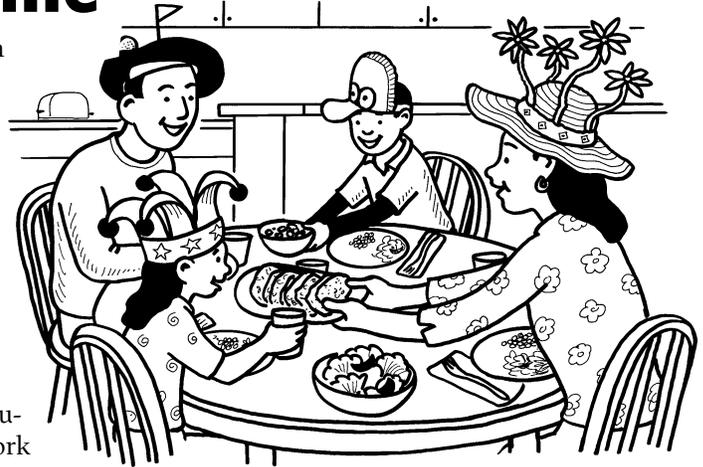
Eating together can build family bonds and inspire your youngster to eat healthier foods. Use these ideas to plan regular meals that he will look forward to.

### Make it a habit

Sharing meals as often as possible will get everyone in the routine. Set times that work for your family. That may mean you have a late dinner after soccer practice one evening and an early breakfast before work and school on another morning.

### Involve your child

Your youngster will be more interested in eating the meal if he helps to prepare it. He might make a healthy dish like fruit salad. He could also set the table and fill water glasses. *Idea:* Let him create place mats by cutting pictures of



nutritious foods from old magazines and gluing them on construction paper.

### Add excitement

Turn the table into a playful place with special-event meals. You might have a “silly hat dinner” (everyone wears a hat that they made or decorated). Use the hats to spark conversation. (“What a great hat. How did you think of it?”) Or have each person pick a storybook character and pretend to be that character throughout the meal. ♥

## Turn off the screens, turn on the fun

Boost your child’s physical activity by setting limits on screen time and encouraging her to play outside instead. Try these strategies.

● **Establish rules.** Tell her when she can and can’t have screen time. For example, on school days, you might allow it only after outdoor play, homework, and dinner.

● **Provide inspiration.** Have your youngster fill a basket with active toys like a jump rope, balls, a bat, and a Frisbee. Then, place the basket near the door so it’s easy to grab equipment on her way outside.

● **Plan ahead.** Let her make outdoor plans with friends. She could organize a weekly game of kickball or hide-and-seek, for instance. ♥



# Waste not, want not

Did you know that nearly one-third of the world's food ends up in the trash? Your family can avoid wasting perfectly good food—plus save money *and* help the environment—with these tips.

**Stick to a list.** Reducing food waste starts with buying only what you need. Ask your child to help you plan a week's



worth of healthy meals and make a grocery list. Go shopping together, and get only what's on the list.

**Take what you'll eat.** Encourage your youngster to put on her plate only what she'll eat. Here's a good strategy: She should serve herself less than she thinks she wants—then she could get seconds if she's still hungry.

**Store leftovers wisely.** Have your child label containers of leftovers with dates and contents. Keep fresh foods with older dates in the front of the refrigerator so you won't forget about them. If you won't use leftovers quickly, move them to the freezer. ♥

## Q&A

### Handling food allergies at school

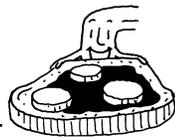
**Q:** My daughter is allergic to eggs, and she's starting school this year. What steps should I take to help her stay safe?

**A:** Begin by talking to your daughter's teacher, the cafeteria manager, and the school nurse. They'll explain the policies for protecting students with allergies, such as how your child can choose safe foods in the cafeteria.



At the same time, help your daughter learn to take responsibility for managing her allergy. For example, she should only eat her own food and not accept food from other students. Explain that she can't eat homemade goods, such as birthday cupcakes, since there's no way to be certain they're egg-free.

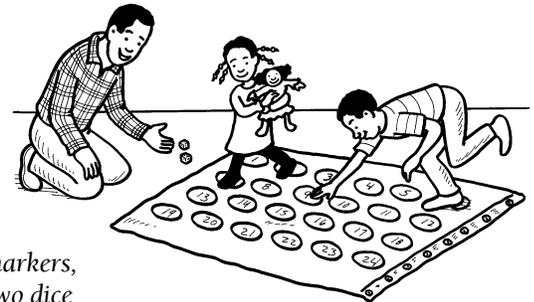
Finally, make sure she knows the symptoms of a reaction, and tell her to get adult help immediately if she notices any or if she thinks she was exposed to eggs. ♥



## ACTIVITY CORNER

### Math-ercise

With this home-made "twist" on Twister, your youngster will improve his balance and flexibility while he practices math facts.



**Materials:** washable or dry-erase markers, soup can, old shower curtain (plain), two dice

1. Let your child turn the shower curtain into a Twister board. He should trace around the soup can to make 4 rows of 6 circles, then number the circles 1–24.
2. One person is the caller. On each player's turn, the caller rolls the dice, uses the numbers to make a math problem, and says which hand or foot the person must put on the circle containing the answer. So if he chose left foot and rolls 2 and 3, he could say, "Left foot on 2 x 3." The first player would place his left foot on 6 and keep it there until his next turn.
3. Continue until all but one person has fallen out of position—that player wins.

*Note:* If a player needs a circle that's already covered, the caller gives a new problem. ♥

## IN THE KITCHEN

### Turn toast into art

Let your child "paint" a slice of whole-wheat toast with mashed black beans and decorate it with avocado slices, corn kernels, and chunky salsa. That's just one fun way to create an edible work of art! Here are more.

#### Parfait

**Paint:** Fat-free cream cheese  
**Decorations:** Blueberries, sliced strawberries, sprinkle of cinnamon

#### Mediterranean

**Paint:** Hummus  
**Decorations:** Cucumber rounds, cherry tomato halves

#### Rain forest

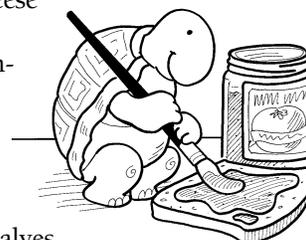
**Paint:** Nut or seed butter  
**Decorations:** Banana slices, shaved coconut

#### Pizza

**Paint:** Tomato sauce  
**Decorations:** Low-fat shredded mozzarella cheese, spinach leaves, sliced mushrooms

#### Garden

**Paint:** Mashed cooked peas  
**Decorations:** Radish slices, crumbled feta cheese ♥



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October 2019

## BEST BITES

### Meal prep + math

Make busy school nights easier—and give your child math practice—with this idea. On weekends, ask him to double recipes for whatever you plan to cook, such as the baked beans for Saturday's picnic or egg casserole for Sunday's breakfast. Then, freeze half to save for a weeknight.

### Heart-healthy exercise

Getting vigorous physical activity every day is good for your youngster's heart and overall health. Right after she's active (runs around outside, walks home from school, plays hockey), have her do a quick check of her body. Is she sweating? Is her heart beating fast? If the answer is yes, then she has exercised vigorously.



### DID YOU KNOW?

Dark leafy greens have more nutrients than iceberg lettuce. For your child's next salad, choose spinach, baby kale, arugula, or romaine lettuce. If he'll only eat iceberg, introduce other greens by gradually adding more of them to each salad he eats.

### Just for fun

**Q:** What has a big mouth but never speaks?

**A:** A jar.



## Fall for healthy outings

With cooler temperatures and a bounty of fruits and vegetables, fall is a great season for healthy family outings. Here are a few to try.

### Go apple picking

Pick ripe, juicy apples at an orchard or the grocery store. Your child can choose different varieties, such as Red Delicious, Granny Smith, and Macintosh. Afterward, hold a tasting party to see which kind everyone likes best. Then, incorporate the apples into meals. For instance, add thin slices to turkey sandwiches or dice into oatmeal.



taste and texture. Then, serve your healthy "purchases" for dinner.

### Visit a market

Stop by a farmers' market or produce stand, and let your youngster pick out colorful fall vegetables. Depending on where you live, she might find acorn squash, parsnips, broccoli, pumpkins, or cabbage. At home, she can play farm stand with your veggies. Pretend to be her customer, and talk about each food's

### Take a "bingo" hike

Go for a hike to get some exercise and appreciate fall scenery. First, have your child make a bingo card filled with things you normally see in your area this time of year. *Examples:* red leaf, acorn, squirrel, pinecone, flock of geese. Family members can check off each item as they spot it. Get five in a row and call out "Bingo!"

## Build character with sports

Playing a sport not only helps your youngster stay fit and learn new skills—it can also be a great character builder. Help him succeed physically and mentally with these three tips.

1. Praise him for effort, a positive attitude, and good sportsmanship, rather than focusing on winning.
2. Encourage responsibility. Have him keep track of his equipment and wash his own uniform and practice clothes.
3. Set a good example by being respectful of players, coaches, and referees.

*Tip:* Make sure your youngster carries healthy snacks and a water bottle in his gym bag.



# Microwave "magic"

Give the microwave a starring role in your kitchen, and you and your child can prepare healthy foods in almost no time! Consider these ideas.

**Potatoes.** Pierce two russet or sweet potatoes several times with a fork to let steam escape (and avoid exploding spuds). Then, microwave 7–10 minutes.

**Bread.** Freshen up bagels and bread. Wrap in a dry paper towel, and zap 10–15 seconds until soft.

**Veggies.** Steam fresh or frozen vegetables such as broccoli, cauliflower, and green beans. Put in a covered microwave-safe



bowl with 1 tbsp. water per cup of veggies. Heat on high 3 minutes, until tender-crisp.

**Corn.** Microwave corn on the cob in the husks! Cook two ears 4–5 minutes, and easily slide off the husks and silk.

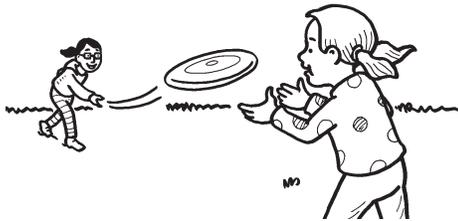
**Bananas.** Ripen a banana quickly. Leave the peel on, and poke holes all the way through with a fork. Heat 30–90 seconds, until slightly softened.

**Citrus fruits.** Get more juice out of your lemons or limes. Place a whole fruit in the microwave, and heat 20 seconds. When it cools, slice in half and squeeze. ♥

## ACTIVITY CORNER

### Frisbee toss

Playing with a Frisbee boosts your youngster's hand-eye coordination and keeps her active. Mix things up with these challenges:



- Stand a few feet apart, and throw the Frisbee to each other. Every time it is caught, you each take one step back. See how far apart you can get before a miss. Then, move back to the starting positions and play again.

- Hang a hula hoop from a tree. Players stand on opposite sides of the hoop and toss the Frisbee back and forth through the hoop. Count how many catches you make without missing.

- Who can throw the Frisbee the farthest? Take turns tossing it, and use a rock to mark the spot where it lands. ♥

## PARENT TO PARENT

### Cooking with a friend

My son Garrett loves to cook, so I wasn't surprised when he wanted to invite a friend over to cook together. We looked online for healthy, kid-friendly recipes and came up with a great idea: ice cube-tray "sushi."

When Garrett's friend arrived, they began by making the rice. (I had them use short-grain rice because it's sticky.) I let them measure and pour, and I handled the stove. While the rice cooked, they microwaved asparagus, green beans, and baby carrots to use for toppings. I chopped the vegetables and helped the boys make scrambled eggs.

After everything cooled, the kids sprayed an ice cube tray with nonstick cooking spray, put veggies and egg in each section, and packed rice over them. They refrigerated the tray for five minutes, then popped out their sushi and ate. Garrett's friend had so much fun that he has already invited my son to cook at his house! ♥



## IN THE KITCHEN

### Dip it in yogurt

Yogurt makes a nutritious breakfast—and it's also great for dipping as a snack or side dish. Using 1 cup plain nonfat Greek yogurt, your child can whip up these quick recipes for a tasty treat.

#### Dill dipper

Stir  $\frac{1}{2}$  tsp. each fresh (or  $\frac{1}{2}$  tsp. dried) dill and chives into yogurt. Serve with whole-wheat crackers or baked pita chips.



#### Cinnamon twist

Mix  $\frac{1}{4}$  tsp. cinnamon and  $\frac{1}{8}$  tsp. each nutmeg and vanilla extract into yogurt. Dunk whole-grain pretzel sticks or fresh strawberries into the dip for a cool after-school snack.

#### Maple almond

Add 1 tsp. maple syrup and  $\frac{1}{2}$  tsp. almond extract to yogurt. Mix in  $\frac{1}{4}$  cup slivered almonds. This is perfect for eating with fruit or low-fat graham crackers. ♥

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## BEST BITES

### Taco-in-a-mug

Here's an easy way for your child to make her own "taco-in-a-mug." Let her put cooked shredded chicken in the bottom, then layer taco ingredients. She might add low-fat pepper jack cheese, salsa, and lettuce. She can sprinkle on crumbled baked tortilla chips and eat right out of the cup!



### Playing together

What's one of the best ways to get your youngster moving and having fun? Join him! Suggest that the two of you throw a football together, or ask him to teach you how to skateboard. You'll set a good example, get some exercise, and enjoy time together.

### DID YOU KNOW?

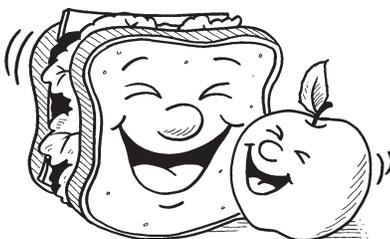
Introduce your child to healthy foods at the grocery store—for free.

Stores often let shoppers sample new items, such as edamame or tri-color quinoa. Say "yes" to anything nutritious that's offered and encourage her to try it. Then, add the products you both like to your shopping cart.

### Just for fun

**Q:** What did the apple say to the sandwich?

**A:** Nothing. Apples can't talk!



## Give peas (and carrots) a chance

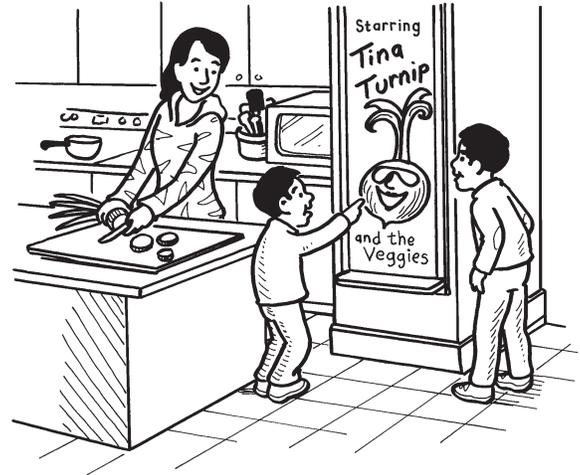
Can vegetables be your child's new favorite foods? Yes! Try these ideas, and watch as veggies become something he looks forward to every day.

### Featured vegetable

Think like an advertiser, and "sell" nutritious food choices to your youngster. You could post a menu with a featured vegetable. Give it a name that will make your child laugh. Maybe "Tina Turnip" will be the roasted root vegetable you'll serve with pot roast and brown rice pilaf. Tomorrow, ask him to sell *you* on the starring vegetable!

### Vary the prep

Does your youngster prefer that vegetables have a certain texture or temperature? You might steam, roast, saute, puree, or blanch carrots or zucchini—which way does he like best? Or if you



always make cooked peas, offer cold pea salad or raw snap peas instead.

### Add extras

Switch up your veggies with flavors your child likes—or may like once he tries them! Add cinnamon to butternut squash or sliced almonds to string beans. Or before cooking veggies, drizzle them with olive oil, then sprinkle on cayenne pepper or chili powder (for heat) or oregano, rosemary, and basil (for an Italian flair). ♡

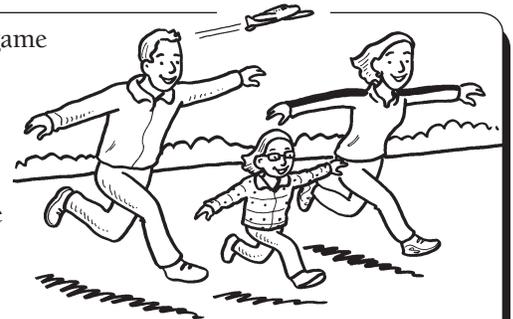
### Make an activity spinner

Turn a spinner from an old board game into a fitness tool. Here's how.

**1.** Your child can cover each wedge of the spinner with a strip of masking tape. On each strip, have her write a fun way to move. *Examples:* "Hop like a frog." "Twirl like a ballet dancer." "Fly like an airplane."

**2.** To play, one person spins the spinner, reads the action, and calls out something in the yard to tag (perhaps a bush).

**3.** Everyone follows the direction (hop, twirl) on the way to the bush and back to the spinner. The first person back spins next. ♡



# Our family cookbook

This keepsake will teach your child about nutritious foods—and help you add more options to your family’s meals.

**Collect.** Have your youngster ask relatives for recipes they’d like to share. Look them over together, and pick out the healthier ones. For instance, your child might choose a casserole with tomato sauce rather than one with heavy cream.



**Compile.** Your youngster can glue each recipe onto a piece of notebook paper and illustrate it. Then, let her sort the recipes into categories, such as pasta, casseroles, and soups, and put them in a binder.

**Use.** Ask your child to pick out recipes and help you cook them. She could take a photograph of herself with each dish and mail it in a thank-you card to the relative who gave her the recipe.

*Idea:* Invite your youngster to share her cookbook with relatives at Thanksgiving. ●

## ACTIVITY CORNER Pumpkin games

Anytime is the perfect time to play outdoors, and November is no exception. Try these games that use a pumpkin instead of a ball!



**Roll it.** Create start and finish lines. Players stand at the start line with a pumpkin at each person’s feet. At “Go,” racers roll the pumpkin along the ground with their hands. The first person to cross the finish line with his pumpkin wins.

**Pass it.** Everyone stands in a circle, arms length apart, with the “starter” holding a pumpkin. Turn on music, signaling the starter to pass the pumpkin to his left. When the music stops, whoever is holding the pumpkin stands still while everyone else runs around the outside of the circle once and stops in any available spot. Turn the music back on, and play again. ●



## Q&A Nutrition for vegetarians

**Q:** My daughter has decided to become a vegetarian. How can I help her get the nutrients she needs?

**A:** Good news: A vegetarian diet can give your daughter all the nutrients her growing body needs. Talk to the school nurse, the cafeteria manager, or her doctor for advice. They may recommend protein sources like tofu, beans, and nuts. For iron, they’re likely to mention leafy green vegetables, dried fruits, and whole grains. Dairy products are good for protein and calcium, and eggs also do double-duty—they contain iron and protein.

Of course, your daughter’s choice means changes for you, too. Try to show support by how you prepare dinner. On spaghetti night, you might serve meatballs on the side. Or make vegetarian versions of favorite recipes, like spinach and mushroom enchiladas instead of chicken, or black bean burgers rather than beef. ●



## IN THE KITCHEN Sheet-pan chicken dinners

Cooking an entire dinner for four on one sheet pan means quicker cleanup. Use 1 lb. boneless, skinless chicken breasts for each of these recipes.

### Cheesy potatoes and broccoli

Drizzle the juice of one lemon on the chicken. In a large bowl, mix ½ lb. cubed red potatoes and 1 broccoli head cut into florets with 1 tbsp. olive oil and 2–3 crushed garlic cloves.

Add to pan and lightly season with salt, pepper, and Parmesan cheese.

Bake at 400° for 35–40 minutes, until chicken is cooked through.

### Fruit and veggie fajitas

Cut chicken into 1-inch strips, and place on cooking sheet. Add 1 sliced bell pepper, 1 sliced onion, and 1 16-oz. can pineapple chunks (in their own juice). In a small bowl, stir together 1 tbsp. each olive oil and lime juice, and 1 tsp. each honey, chili powder, and cumin. Drizzle over chicken mixture. Bake at

350° for 20 minutes.

When cooked through, serve in warmed whole-grain tortillas. ●



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