

Nutrition Nuggets

Food and Fitness for a Healthy Child

Middlesex Elementary School
Margo Bridge

BEST BITES



Math + fitness

Give your child a chance to combine math practice and exercise with daily “math breaks.” Give directions that include a math problem and a fitness activity. For example, say, “Do $2 + 2$ jumping jacks” or “Do $11 - 2$ cartwheels.”



Healthy shopping

When you go to the grocery store, “shop the perimeter” first. The outside aisles are where you’ll usually find fresh produce, healthy dairy products (fat-free milk, yogurt, and cheese), and fresh meats, chicken, and fish. Fill your cart mostly with those items, and then get what you need from the middle of the store.

DID YOU KNOW?

Research shows that students who skip breakfast have shorter attention spans and don’t do as well on tests. Make sure your youngster gets up in time to have a nutritious breakfast either at home or at school. *Tip:* If he’s having trouble waking up early enough, move his bedtime back.

Just for fun

Q: What’s the worst thing about being an octopus?

A: Washing your hands before meals!



Snack attack

“I’m starving!” When your child bursts through the door after school or day care, she’s probably hungry. Try these tips for healthy snacks that will give her the energy she needs to play and do homework.

Stock the kitchen

Whatever is in the house is what your youngster will eat—so shop with that in mind. Get interesting fruits and vegetables in different colors. Buy mango or peach salsa, and let your child dip in veggie sticks (carrot, celery, jicama). Stock popcorn to air pop (rather than getting less healthy microwave popcorn). Then, offer her choices. She’ll have a say in what she eats, but she’ll be choosing only from healthy foods.

Have a mini-meal

Breakfast or lunch foods can make a good snack. You could serve oatmeal with raisins and nuts or tuck scrambled eggs into a pita pocket. Or try individual pizzas on whole-wheat English muffins. Top each half with a little tomato sauce; shredded low-fat mozzarella cheese, and



vegetables (sliced mushrooms, chopped onions), and bake until the cheese melts.

Build your own

Let your child get creative in the kitchen, and she’ll be likely to eat the results. She can make kebabs by threading fruit (grapes, melon chunks) and low-fat cheese cubes onto toothpicks. Put out cookie cutters for her to cut sandwiches into fun shapes. Or she could spread peanut or almond butter on rice cakes, apples, or bananas and decorate them with raisins and nuts. ●

Feeling good about sports

Participating in sports can build your child up... or drag him down. Make athletics a positive experience for your youngster with these strategies:

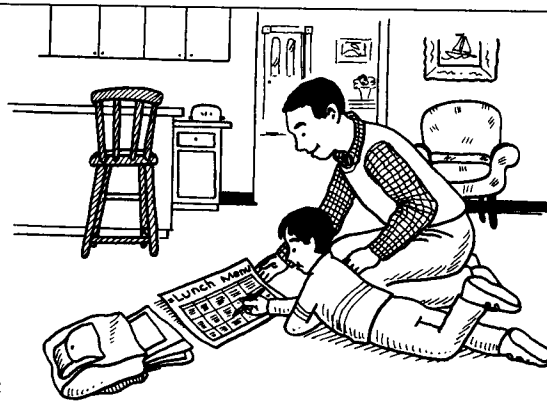
- Keep games in perspective. At this age, sports should be about having fun and developing skills. Ask about his favorite part of practice or the most interesting play in the game, rather than focusing on his performance or the score.
- Encourage him to set goals—but make sure the goals are realistic. He might aim to touch the ball three times during a game or to try a move that he’s been working on.
- Avoid comments about your youngster’s size or body. Concentrate on the friends he is making, the places he is playing, and the effort he is putting forth (“I love how you tried to get the rebound”). ●



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Cafeteria plan

Why should your child buy school meals? Cafeteria meals are healthier than ever because of new national nutrition standards. Plus, if he gets lunch at school, you can knock “pack lunch” off your to-do list! Consider these three suggestions.



1. Go over the school menu together. He could circle his favorite items and decide what he will put on his tray the next day. Talk up the menu items (“The pork burrito sounds really good!”). If you’re excited about the choices, he’s likely to share your excitement.

2. Discuss what he eats at school. What does he like best? What does he throw in the trash? You might suggest that he write to the cafeteria manager to tell her about his favorite meals. He could also mention what he doesn’t like and make recommendations for new foods to serve.

3. Join your youngster in the cafeteria. Buy a school lunch, too, and be enthusiastic about what you’re eating. *Note:* If you can’t take time off work, perhaps a grandparent or other relative could stop by for lunch with your child sometime. 🍎



Q & A How much juice?

Q: My children love to drink juice. Should I try to limit how much of it they drink?



A: The short answer is “yes.” While juice has nutrients, it also has a lot of sugar. Believe it or not, a 12-ounce glass of apple juice can contain 10 teaspoons of sugar—the same as in a can of cola—and a glass of grape juice can

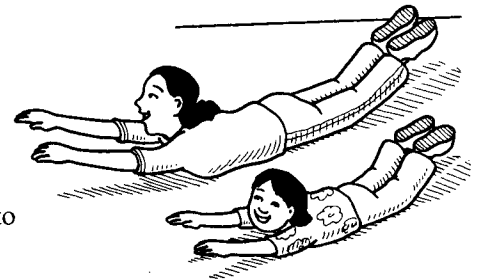
have 15 teaspoons of sugar. Encourage your children to eat fruit rather than drink juice. They will consume fiber along with more nutrients.

If your kids do have juice, try to limit it to a glass a day. Choose varieties marked 100 percent juice, and stay away from those labeled “fruit drink,” “fruit,” or “cocktail.” The best bets are orange or grapefruit juice since they have more natural vitamin C and less sugar. 🍎

ACTIVITY CORNER

Exercise = fun

When children are young, exercise isn’t exercise—it’s just plain fun! Try these ideas for putting more physical activity into your youngster’s day.



Superman

Lie on your tummy with your arms straight out in front of you (as if you’re flying). Lift your arms and legs off the ground at the same time, and hold for five seconds. Put your arms and legs back down. “Fly” 10 more times.

Bubble jumping jacks

Have your child do jumping jacks as you blow bubbles toward her. How many bubbles can she catch as she jumps? Switch, and let her blow the bubbles as you do jumping jacks.

Freeze dance

Play music, and dance up a storm. When you stop the music, everyone freezes. Hold your poses for 10 seconds, and start the music back up. 🎵

IN THE KITCHEN

Rice bowls

For a quick and healthy meal, borrow this idea from Asian cuisine. Cook brown rice, divide it into bowls for each person, and add toppings.

Breakfast: Scrambled eggs, chopped tomatoes, diced green bell peppers, and shredded Monterey Jack cheese

Pizza: Cooked turkey sausage, sliced mushrooms, chopped onions, low-salt tomato sauce, and a sprinkle of oregano

Chicken: Cubed, cooked chicken (use last night’s

leftovers), microwaved frozen vegetables like corn, peas, and carrots, and low-sodium teriyaki sauce

Taco: Ground beef (browned and drained), canned kidney beans (drained), shredded cheddar cheese, low-fat sour cream, and salsa

Note: One-half cup of brown rice provides one serving of whole grains (three servings a day are recommended).

Also, rice is gluten-free, so it’s a great choice for children with celiac disease or wheat allergies. 🍌



OUR PURPOSE

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

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

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