

Nutrition Nuggets

Food and Fitness for a Healthy Child

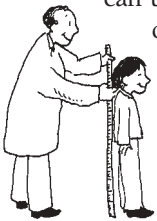
Premier Issue

BEST BITES



Know their BMI

Find out your child's Body Mass Index. That's the number that measures height against weight and lets you know if your youngster is at a healthy weight. You can use the parent-friendly online tool at <http://apps.nccd.cdc.gov/dnpabmi/Calculator.aspx>, or ask your pediatrician to figure it out at your child's next visit.



No obstacle

For some fun exercise, help your child build an obstacle course. Use empty cereal boxes to scoot around, a table to crawl under, a large cardboard box to wiggle through, and a pile of pillows to dive into. The key? Create obstacles for your child to go over, under, through, and around.

Get milk

Good news: Flavored milk gives your youngster the same nutrients and health benefits as white milk does. And many children are more apt to drink milk when it tastes like strawberry or chocolate. Whichever flavor your child likes, use milk that's 1 percent or, better yet, fat-free.

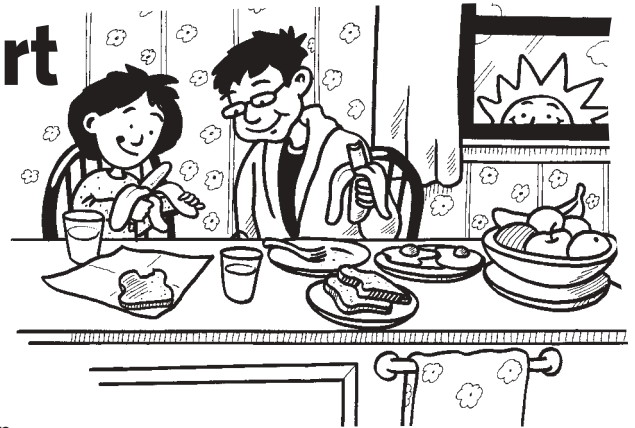


DID YOU KNOW?

Childhood obesity is an epidemic in America today. About 15 percent of children are obese, and another 30 percent are overweight. Experts blame the problem on too much television and too little exercise, along with soda and junk food crowding out fruits, vegetables, and healthy drinks in youngsters' diets.

A good start

Did you know that breakfast is the most important meal of your child's day? It provides the nutrients and energy he needs to concentrate in school. Research even shows that kids who eat breakfast get better grades, pay more attention in class, and behave better. Help your youngster begin his day on the right foot.



Make time

Set the alarm to allow 10–15 unhurried minutes for breakfast. Suggest several healthy breakfast items, and let your child choose. *Tip:* If your youngster doesn't like to make decisions first thing in the morning, give him breakfast choices the night before.

Make it healthy

Give your child a mix of protein (such as milk, eggs, cheese, or meat) and carbohydrates (whole-grain cereal, fruit, or whole-wheat bread). The carbohydrates boost energy and help your child jump-start his day, while the protein keeps his body going strong until lunchtime.

Make it kid-friendly

These quick breakfasts are sure to bring an early-morning smile to your youngster's face:

● **Egg in a Basket:** Cover a frying pan with no-fat cooking spray. Tear a hole out of a slice of whole-wheat bread, put the slice in the pan, and

crack an egg into the hole. Cook two minutes, flip, and cook until the egg is set and lightly browned.

● **Waffle Wonder:** Toast a whole-grain frozen waffle. Put sliced strawberries around the edge and fill with a handful of blueberries. Serve with a side of low-fat flavored cottage cheese or yogurt. ●

Mealtime magic

Do your kids rush through dinner and bolt from the table? Try these ideas to build quality family time into your dinner hour.

● **Keep the conversation light.** Focus on the events of the day or fun weekend plans ahead. Of course, praising your children for a job well done at school or home is always welcome!

● **Take turns.** Ask each person to tell one interesting thing he or she learned during the day. That includes you, too. You might mention something you read in the newspaper or learned about at work.

● **Play a game.** Try the "name game." Start with the name of someone famous (George Washington). Go around the table, taking turns calling out another well-known person or character with the same first or last name (Curious George, George Washington Carver). ●



It all adds up

Exercise doesn't have to be done all at once. Encourage your youngster to be active throughout the day—small amounts of time will add up! In general, school-age children should get at least an hour of physical activity each day. Here are some ways to put more exercise into your child's routine:

- Have her invite friends over for a backyard game of tag or capture the flag.



- Suggest that she jump rope for 10 minutes.
- Put on some music, and dance to it.
- Bike together to the library or a friend's house. *Note:* For safety, use sidewalks and wear helmets.
- When you do errands together, park far from the store to encourage more walking time.

- Take the steps rather than the elevator when you're shopping or at the dentist.

Remember: Regular exercise will not only make your child healthier—it will help her sleep better at night and be in better shape to learn and play all day.

ACTIVITY CORNER

A walk a day

A daily family walk is a great way to get your child—and you—moving. Some families take a walk after dinner. Others plan a morning walk on the weekends. For parents who are home after school, that's often a great time to walk.

Figure out the best time for your family's schedule, and use the time to walk and talk—you'll be helping everyone get healthier, and you'll be spending special time together. Make the walk more fun by mixing it up: walk one block and skip for the next, or alternate walking fast and slow.

You can even sneak in some learning time on your walk. For example, have your child count how many trees you pass or read the signs along the way.



IN THE KITCHEN

Smoothie time

Here's a sure-fire way to get kids excited about eating healthfully. Toss fruit, a few ice cubes, yogurt, and juice into a blender, and mix until thick. With your supervision, your youngsters can even do it themselves! Try these combinations.

Red & White—4 strawberries, 1 banana, 1 container low-fat vanilla yogurt, 1 cup orange juice

Cool Blue—1½ cups fresh or frozen blueberries, 1 container low-fat blueberry yogurt, 1 cup 100% grape juice

Just Peachy—1 cut-up peach or 1 cup frozen peaches, 1 container low-fat peach yogurt, ¾ cup orange juice

Tip: Add a teaspoon of wheat bran (available at your grocery or health food store) to put fiber into your youngsters' treats.



Q & A Too many snacks

Q: When my child comes home from school, he snacks all afternoon and then isn't hungry for dinner. How can I get him to change this habit?

A: You may be surprised to know that children actually need snacks. Their stomachs are small, so they can't get all the food and nutrients they need in just three meals a day. The trick is to give your youngster a snack that's both healthy and filling so he will be able to wait until dinnertime to eat again.

Try giving your child a choice of snacks when he comes home. Offer foods like microwave low-fat popcorn,

string cheese and fruit, or "ants on a log" (peanut butter spread on celery stalks and covered with raisins).

Tip: If your youngster is in day care after school, find out when they serve the last snack of the day. Ask that your child not have one too close to your dinnertime.



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.