Nutrition Nuggets™

Food and Fitness for a Healthy Child

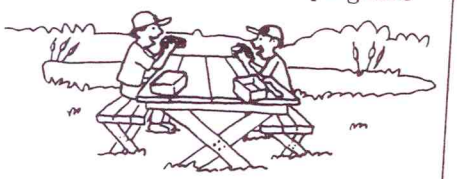
May 2013

Piscataway Township Schools

BEST BITES

Camp lunches

If your youngster goes to summer camp, take a look at the lunch menu. These programs



may not have the same nutritional standards that you can rely on from the school cafeteria. Consider packing healthy lunches for him instead, but ask if they will be refrigerated. If not, be careful to avoid mayonnaise, meats, and dairy foods.

Run for charity

Encourage your family to exercise together by signing up for a charity run or walk. Check local newspaper or online listings for upcoming events. *Idea:* Let your child help choose one for a cause that affects a relative or friend, such as cancer or autism. Then, mark it on your calendar, and figure out a training plan (walking or running a certain distance each day).

DID YOU KNOW?

If your youngster doesn't get enough sleep, her body won't produce as much leptin, a hormone that helps her to feel full. Then she's likely to wake up hungrier and eat more. While it's tempting to let kids stay up later in the summer, try not to make it too late—perhaps add 15 or 30 minutes to her school-night schedule.

Just for fun

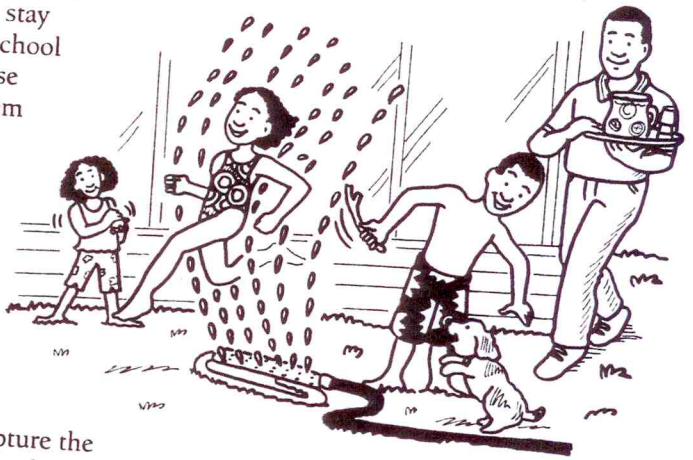
Q: What are the most delicious books?

A: Cookbooks!

© 2013 Resources for Educators, a division of CCH Incorporated

Have an active summer

Being active over the summer can help your children stay healthy and return to school ready to learn. Use these suggestions to keep them happy and moving all summer long.

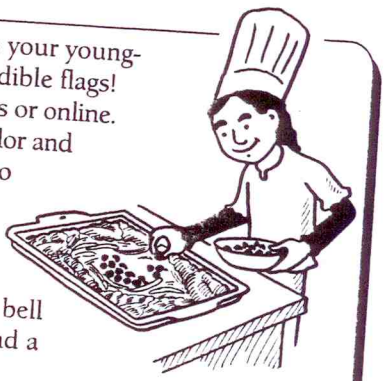


Just play. Try to build in time for playing outdoors each day. Let your kids run through the sprinkler on a hot day. Have them dig in the dirt and play games like tag or capture the flag. Or set up an outdoor obstacle course with upside-down buckets, inner tubes, and cardboard boxes. *Tip:* Hold a daily contest—a long jump one day, limbo the next, and a 50-yard dash another time.

Take outings. Walk or bike to a playground or field, and bring along balls, bats, or jump ropes. On weekends, try to plan on at least one active family event. You might hike in a state park, go canoeing, ice skate at an indoor rink, or tour a museum or historical site.

Limit screen time. It can be all too easy for kids to plop down in front of a TV, computer, or video game on a lazy summer day. Restricting screen time to 1–2 hours can give your children a chance to be active the rest of the day. *Idea:* Even while using a screen, include active play with "jumping jack breaks" during commercials or a run around the block when someone reaches a new level in a game.

Food flags



Here's a fun way to get in a geography lesson as your youngster creates and eats healthy dishes: let her make edible flags!

First, help her find pictures of flags in library books or online. Then, brainstorm ideas for foods to represent each color and shape. *Idea:* Go to a grocery store or farmers' market to look for items. That will help her learn about new fruits and vegetables *and* inspire her to try them!

Here are two to get her started:

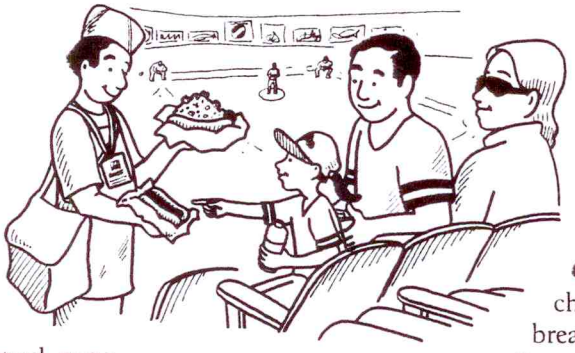
Brazil: A rectangular bed of spinach with yellow bell pepper slices arranged in a diamond in the center and a circle of blueberries on top.

China: A rectangle of halved strawberries (red side up) with a large slice of star fruit in the top left corner and four smaller star fruit slices in a semicircle beside it.

How many food flags can your child design?

This institution is an equal opportunity provider.

Take me out to the ball game



Heading to a stadium, an amusement park, or a fair this summer? Along with fun, these places can pack a lot of calories! Try to keep things healthier with these strategies:

- Order "regular" sizes. If your child has a hot dog, make it a normal one with mustard, not a "jumbo" with all the fixings.
- Choose grilled items rather than fried goodies. You might find a grilled beef kebab, fish sandwich, or turkey burger, for example.
- Forget the hand-squeezed lemonade—it's filled with sugar. Ask for a lemon wedge to squeeze into refreshing cold water instead.
- Have corn on the cob or a baked potato rather than french fries. *Tip:* Skip the heavy toppings and put salsa (from the nacho bar) on the potato.
- Look for all-fruit smoothies or fresh fruit salads.
- Get a chicken wrap rather than chicken tenders, which are typically breaded and served with high-calorie dipping sauce.
- As long as your child isn't allergic, consider a bag of peanuts. It takes time to crack open each shell, so they last longer, and peanuts are high in protein, fiber, and vitamins.

Tip: Eat something filling and healthy before leaving home so your youngster isn't starving when you get there.

ACTIVITY CORNER Old-fashioned games

Your youngster will enjoy hearing about games her relatives played in the "olden days." Share some stories, and then try versions like these.

Hoop and stick

Mark a course, maybe up and down a driveway or sidewalk. Then, have each person use a stick to roll a hula hoop from one end to the other. The first one to the finish line wins.

Tug of war

Form two teams that are roughly equal in weight, such as a child on each side or a parent on one side and two kids on the other. Each team holds on to opposite ends of a sturdy rope (pulled tight). Put a line of pillows in the middle, and let the teams begin tugging. The first side to fall into the pillows loses.

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 CCH Incorporated
128 N. Royal Avenue • Front Royal, VA 22630
540-636-4280 • rfecustomer@wolterskluwer.com
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

© 2013 Resources for Educators, a division of CCH Incorporated

Q&A Diets for children?

Q: *Our son is overweight. Should we put him on a diet?*

A: The place to start is with your pediatrician. Ask if your child's weight is a problem or if he is likely to outgrow it as he gets taller. Unless he is very overweight, the best approach often is a combination of daily physical activity and a balanced diet with lots of nutrients and not too many sweets.

Try to have your child keep to a regular meal and snack schedule. Also, eating meals together helps—you can control the food choices by what you serve. Keep fresh fruits and vegetables on hand, and avoid obvious culprits like fast food, chips, candy, and soda.

Finally, focus on the person that your child is—not his shape. It's important at this age that he develop a healthy relationship with food and with his own body.

IN THE KITCHEN Salad in a jar

When it's too hot for heavy meals, salads are often the answer for adults. Help make them a favorite with your child, too, with this clever idea.

In a clean jar, layer salad ingredients, starting with dressing on the bottom. Refrigerate, and then shake when you're ready to eat. This is a fun activity to do with your youngster—he can pick out his favorite ingredients and do the layering himself. *Idea:* Challenge him to put one food that he doesn't usually eat into each jar.

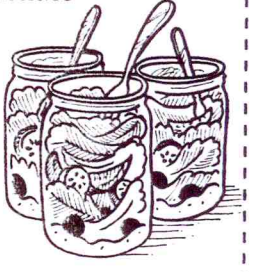
Try combinations like these:

Low-fat ranch dressing
Chopped red bell pepper
Grape tomatoes
Hard-boiled egg
Spinach leaves

***

Low-fat French dressing
Shredded carrots
Raisins
Sunflower seeds
Shredded romaine lettuce

***



Low-fat vinaigrette
Walnuts
Grapes
Feta cheese
Red-leaf lettuce

***

Low-fat Italian dressing
Cooked shrimp (cooled)
Cooked green beans
Cooked potatoes (cut into chunks)
Bibb lettuce