

# Nutrition Nuggets

Food and Fitness for a Healthy Child

October 2020

Covington County Schools

Child Nutrition Program

## BEST BITES

### Explore herbs and spices

Cilantro, rosemary, turmeric ... herbs and spices add flavor to food without adding fat or sodium. Help your child create a snack tray to sample natural seasonings. She might include fat-free Greek yogurt flavored with cinnamon, halved grape tomatoes sprinkled with dill, and popcorn tossed with paprika.



### Night games

It may be getting dark earlier, but you and your youngster can still fit in some active family time after dinner. Use flashlights for a game of tag. Or play "moonball" with him—a game of catch with a glow-in-the-dark ball (buy one at the dollar store, or put glow-in-the-dark stickers on a regular ball).

### DID YOU KNOW?

It's easier than ever to find alternatives to peanut butter. Healthy options include spreads made from cashews, sunflower seeds, soy nuts, almonds, and even chickpeas. Coconut butter, on the other hand, tends to have more saturated fat. *Tip:* Look for varieties with no added sugar.

### Just for fun

**Dad:** Why did you ride your bike twice?

**Ben:** I was re-cycling.



## Tips for healthier takeout

Whether it's a busy school night or a special occasion, your family may decide to order food from a restaurant. Teach your youngster to make healthier choices with this advice.

### Find the winners

Help your child recognize nutritious options with an awards ceremony. Read restaurant menus and vote on awards like "Best selection of vegetables," "Most whole-grain options," and "Healthiest overall." Your youngster can announce winners—and choose one the next time you order takeout.

### Play to-go bingo

Motivate your child to make good selections with this game. Let him create a bingo card with columns for different types of restaurants (pizza, Chinese). In each box, he can write a healthy choice (whole-wheat crust and side salad under pizza, steamed vegetable dumplings and brown rice under Chinese). Each time he tries a food on his card, he may cross it out. Five in a row = to-go bingo!

### Living room limbo

Play this favorite party game indoors to improve your child's flexibility—and enjoy active family fun.

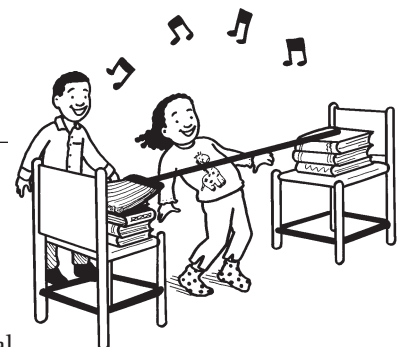
**Set up:** Place a broom across the tops of two chairs. Then, stack books on the seat of each chair. The stacks should be about equal in height and come nearly to the tops of the seat backs.

**Play:** Turn on music as family members take turns walking under the stick while bending backward. If anyone touches the stick with any part of her body, or touches the floor with anything but her feet, she's out. Now lower the stick onto the top books and limbo again. For each round, remove a book from each stack. The last player still in wins.



### Design "kids' meals"

Encourage your youngster to be creative with his order. Instead of looking at the kids' menu—which is typically filled with fried foods like chicken nuggets and french fries—have him put together a meal of healthy appetizers and sides. Maybe he'd like a turkey burger slider and steamed broccoli. Or perhaps he'll create a combo of grilled chicken strips and fresh fruit.

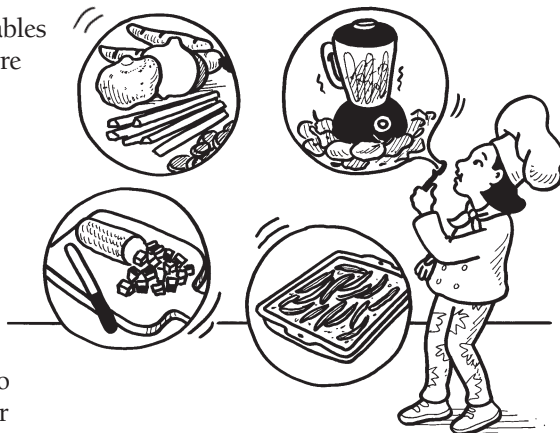


# Change up vegetables

Children need  $1\frac{1}{2}$ –2 cups of vegetables every day, so how can you squeeze more into your youngster's diet? Try these variations to find her new favorites!

**1. Change the shape.** Cut cooked carrots or jicama into sticks or coins. Also, try shredding brussels sprouts or cabbage into salads or paninis.

**2. Change the texture.** Your child might enjoy tender or pureed veggies. Have her stir spinach or kale into her favorite soup and watch it wilt. Or



use pureed potatoes or cauliflower instead of heavy cream or flour to thicken sauces.

**3. Change the size.** Small bites of vegetables may be easier for your youngster to accept. Dice cooked zucchini or sweet potatoes into tiny pieces, and let her add them to casseroles or top her tacos with them.

**4. Change the cooking method.**

One night you could steam parsnips or okra, and another time you might roast or sauté them. Or turn asparagus spears or green beans into "fries." Help

your child dunk them into a beaten egg and roll them in whole-wheat breadcrumbs. Bake at 400° until browned and crispy, about 15 minutes. ♥

## ACTIVITY CORNER

### An autumn "playground"

As temperatures drop and the air feels crisp, head outside with your child for playful fitness fun. Here are some ideas.

• **Leaf path.** For a game of Follow the Leader, let your youngster line up fallen leaves with a few feet between each. Take turns leading everyone along the path, moving in a different way (hop, skip, gallop) from one leaf to the next.

• **Pumpkin weights.** Have your child hold a mini pumpkin in each hand.

Now play Simon Says.

You might say, "Simon says lift your arms out to your sides." "Do backward arm circles."



• **Apple relay.** Split into teams and take turns running—with an apple—from a start line to a finish line, then back again until everyone has had a turn. The twist? Each player on a team has to hold his apple in a different way (behind your back, on your head). ♥

## 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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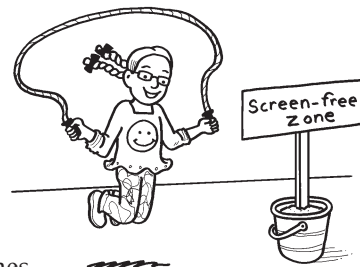
## Q&A Unplug for physical activity

**Q:** How can I get my daughter to spend less time on screens and more time being active?

**A:** Encourage your child to keep track of her screen time for one week. Together, brainstorm ways to cut back. If she spent 10 hours watching TV and playing video games last week, you might limit her to 8 hours total this week.

To help, perhaps you'll designate screen-free zones like her bedroom and the kitchen table. Also, help her set a goal to be active at least 1 hour per day.

Then, why not have your daughter use her screen time to find ways to be active? She could search for kid-friendly workout videos on YouTube—some are based on moves from video-game characters and superheroes. She might even look up "active games for kids" and teach your family to play new ones. ♥



## IN THE KITCHEN

### Pasta perfection

October is National Pasta Month. Celebrate with these healthy versions of kid favorites. *Note:* For each recipe, cook 16 oz. whole-wheat pasta according to package directions.

**Macaroni and cheese.** In a large pot, melt 3 tbsp. butter, and whisk in 3 tbsp. flour until smooth. Stir in  $2\frac{1}{2}$  cups nonfat milk and simmer until thickened. Reduce heat, and stir in  $2\frac{1}{2}$  cups low-fat shredded cheddar cheese until

melted. Whisk in  $\frac{1}{2}$  cup plain Greek yogurt. Toss with pasta, 1 cup cooked peas, and 1 diced tomato.

**Chicken parmesan.** Sprinkle 1 tsp. Italian seasoning over 1 lb. boneless chicken breasts. Bake at 375° for 30 minutes, or until cooked through. Pour 1 24-oz. jar low-sodium marinara sauce over chicken. Top with 1 cup low-fat shredded mozzarella cheese, and broil 5 minutes, or until cheese melts. Serve over spaghetti. ♥

