

Nutrition Nuggets

Food and Fitness for a Healthy Child

May 2012

Pickens County School System
School Nutrition Program

BEST BITES



Pick your own

Going to a pick-your-own farm is a fun way to spend an afternoon—and a good way to encourage your youngster to eat more fruits and vegetables. He'll learn how they grow, and he's more likely to try produce that he picks himself. Check pickyourown.org for nearby farms and crop calendars.



Strike up the band!

Put on upbeat music, and join your child in marching to the beat. Suggest a "high step," where you raise each leg high (touching knee to elbow). You might get a baton at a dollar store or yard sale, and let her practice twirling outside. Then, she could be the drum majorette and lead your family on a march to the music.

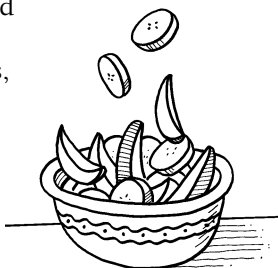
DID YOU KNOW?

You can make pasta sauce in a jiffy, and it will be much healthier than the store-bought kind. In a saucepan, combine 2 large cans whole tomatoes, 1 small can tomato paste, and 1 bay leaf. Bring to a boil, stirring often. Add a pinch of sugar, and season with oregano, basil, and pepper. Simmer for 30 minutes. *Bonus:* The sauce freezes beautifully.

Just for fun

Teacher: If I slice a banana into 10 pieces and cut a pear into 6 pieces, what will I get?

Jamie: Fruit salad!



What's in my food?

Teach your child to check the ingredient label on packaged foods, and you'll instill a life-long habit that can help her choose foods wisely. Here's how:

1. Have your youngster take a few items out of your pantry or refrigerator and read the ingredient lists out loud. What's first? Last? Explain that ingredients are listed in order by amount—the food contains the most of the first ingredient and the least of the last ingredient.
2. Ask her to check the labels for specific ingredients. For example, where in the order does whole wheat or sugar appear? Point out that sugar goes by different names, including many that end in "ose" (glucose, fructose, dextrose, maltose, sucrose, and high-fructose corn syrup).
3. Let your child count the number of ingredients. When it comes to ingredient lists, shorter is usually better. If she's reading, she should be able to recognize many



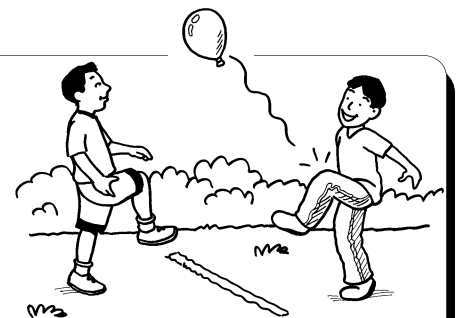
of the words. If they're long and complicated, they are likely to be chemicals rather than natural foods.

4. Finally, have your youngster put what she's learning into practice when you go grocery shopping. She can read ingredient lists to help you select products. Suggest that she look for varieties that list salt, oil, and sugar toward the end. Or you might agree on a rule of thumb, such as no more than five ingredients. ♥

Outdoor games

Encourage your youngsters to be active this summer with fun games like these.

Balloon ball. Blow up a balloon, and make a "net" from a jump rope or shaving cream on the ground. The object is to bat the balloon back and forth—if you let it drop, the other person (or team) scores a point. The twist? For each game, name a different body part (arms, knees, elbows) to use in hitting the balloon.



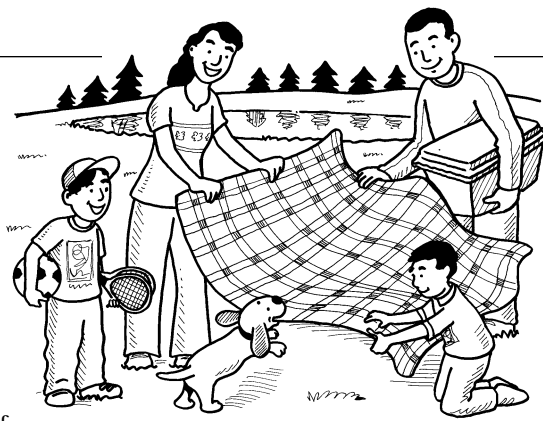
Land, sea, air. Listen closely, and jump the right way! Mark a line with chalk, and have players stand on it. Then, a "caller" yells "land" (jump backward), "sea" (jump forward), or "air" (jump straight up). Jump the wrong way, and you're out. *Idea:* For a faster-paced game, call out sequences ("land, sea, land, air") for players to follow. ♥

Picnic and play

We're not sure why, but food just seems to taste better outside! Put together a simple picnic with healthy ingredients, add a little exercise, and let your family enjoy meals *alfresco* (Italian for "outdoors").

Where to go

You can have a picnic any evening of the week—just spread a blanket out back, and take food out from your kitchen. Or pack food, and head to a nearby field, pond, or park. To keep picnic foods safe, be sure to put meats and other perishable items in a cooler with ice packs.



What to take

Keep your picnic healthy by updating a few classics. For instance, swap fried chicken for rotisserie chicken. Rather than chips and dip, pack raw vegetables (carrots, jicama, bell pepper) and hummus. And forget the mayonnaise-laden macaroni salad, coleslaw, and potato salad—instead, toss packaged broccoli slaw with low-fat poppy seed dressing.

What to play

Pack physical activity into your picnic by taking along balls, Frisbees, hula hoops, or a badminton set. Or tuck in a few cloth napkins, and have a "napkin race." Lay down a row of napkins (one for each runner) on a blanket or picnic table. Players line up opposite their napkins, about 50 feet away. At "go," race to your napkin, pick it up with your teeth, and race back. ♥

ACTIVITY CORNER

A hiking we will go...



Looking for a way for your family to spend time together that is free and fun? Try hiking. These tips can help you get off to a good start:

- Make sure your child wears comfortable sneakers or hiking boots and dresses for the weather. Layers are especially good for when he warms up or if the weather cools down.

- Take along plenty of water and healthy snacks (almonds, peanut butter and crackers, dried fruit) to give him energy along the way.



Idea: Before your youngster gets tired or hungry, announce an "energy break," and stop to snack.

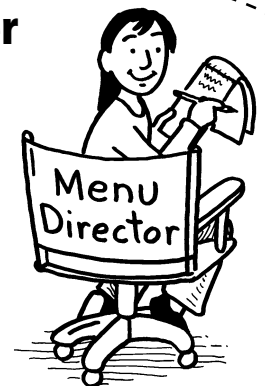
- Try to design hikes around places that will be interesting for your child. For instance, pick a route with a creek for skipping stones or historic sites to visit. *Tip:* Follow your child's lead. If he spots a rock formation or a hollow log he finds fascinating, give him time to explore. ♥

Q & A My child, the menu planner

Q: My youngster asks me to make spaghetti and meatballs or macaroni and cheese every night. I love those dishes, too, but how can I get her interested in more variety?

A: Why not get your child involved in planning menus with you. You might give her a job with a title ("Menu Director" or "Family Meal Planner"). Suggest that she interview family members about their favorite meals. She could even call relatives or friends to see what they like to eat at their houses. Then, she might compile a list of dishes and look through cookbooks or cooking websites for recipes.

Let her pick out a few and consult with you on good days to try them. Finally, involve her in shopping and cooking. You'll have a new partner in the kitchen, and she just might expand her eating horizons. ♥



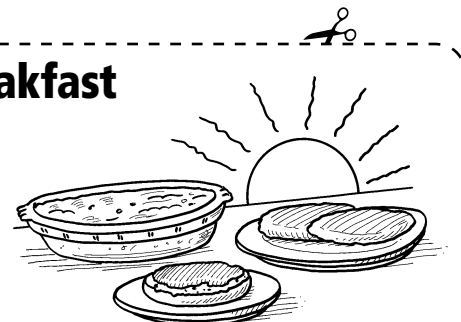
IN THE KITCHEN

Veggies for breakfast

When you think of breakfast, vegetables may not be the first food that comes to mind. But the first meal of the day is a wonderful place to start! Consider these ideas.

Quick frittata. Whisk together 5 eggs, $\frac{1}{4}$ cup fat-free milk, $\frac{1}{4}$ cup shredded cheddar cheese, salt, and pepper. Stir in vegetables (cut-up asparagus, broccoli pieces). Pour into a pie pan (coated with nonstick spray). Bake at 375° for about 20 minutes, until eggs are set.

Sweet potato spread. For a make-ahead breakfast, bake a sweet potato (wash, pat dry, and use a fork to poke holes) at 400° for an hour, until soft. Scoop out the flesh, and mash with a



fork. Use as a spread for whole-grain English muffins or toast.

Squash pancakes. Grate zucchini, and chop yellow squash. Sprinkle on salt, and set in a colander for 20 minutes (to remove moisture). Rinse well. Combine with diced onion and chopped bell pepper. Put large spoonfuls into a hot skillet (coated with nonstick spray), and sauté the pancakes until brown on both sides. ♥

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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