

# Nutrition Nuggets

Food and Fitness for a Healthy Child

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Magnolia Independent School District  
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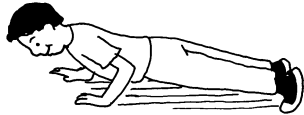
## BEST BITES

### School meals rock

Would your youngster enjoy X-ray Vision Carrots, Rainbow Risotto, or Squish Squash Lasagna? Today's school lunches feature plenty of good-for-you foods, often with cool names. Interest your child in eating her school's meals by reviewing the weekly menus together and helping her make choices. Each evening, let her describe the tastes to you.

### Push it

Push-ups are a terrific strength-training exercise. They're also convenient—they can be done anywhere. When



your youngster does them, have him keep his body "flat like a table" from the top of his head down to his heels. How many can he do? Even better: Do push-ups alongside him, and challenge each other to do one more!

### DID YOU KNOW?

Dish sponges are frequently teeming with bacteria. Regularly sanitizing yours will help keep your family healthy. Run it through a dishwasher on the "heated dry" setting, or soak it for 5 minutes in a solution of 2 tbsp. bleach to 3 cups water. Sponges without any metal may be soaked in water and microwaved on high for 1 minute.

### Just for fun

**Q:** Why do fish live in salt water?

**A:** Because pepper makes them sneeze.



## Kids + cooking = fun!

Encourage your child to eat healthier foods by getting her involved "behind the scenes" in meal preparation. Here are some motivating and inviting strategies.

### Focus on shapes

Foods come in many different shapes. To highlight circles, your youngster might toss together a salad of cooked wagon wheel pasta, cherry tomatoes, and round yellow bell pepper slices. Or help her make "veggie cubes" by cutting sweet potatoes and parsnips into square shapes, mixing with a little olive oil, and roasting at 400° for 20 minutes or until tender.

### Explore textures

Show your child how the texture of food can change. Shred a bunch of fresh kale, and have her taste it raw. Then, ask her to stir the rest with Italian dressing and let it sit for 30 minutes. How does the texture feel when she tastes it again? You could explain that the vinegar (which

contains acetic acid) in the dressing softens the kale.

### Dinner and a movie

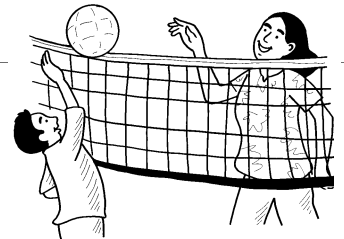
Make a meal with your youngster based on a favorite movie—and then watch the movie after you eat. Spaghetti and meatballs are perfect for *Cloudy with a Chance of Meatballs*. Roasted salmon with potatoes is a popular Norwegian dish and pairs well with *Frozen*. ♥



### Borderline overweight: Catch it early

Today, many children are on the verge of being overweight. If your youngster is showing signs of becoming too heavy, try these tips at the table:

- Children don't need the same-size portions as adults. Start your youngster's meal with servings that are  $\frac{1}{3}$  to  $\frac{1}{2}$  the size of yours. He may ask for more if he's still hungry.
- During family meals, stop "speed eating" by suggesting that everyone sip water between bites. Slowing down the pace will give your child more time to feel satisfied, making it less likely he'll overeat.
- Serve fresh fruit for dessert. It's delicious on its own, paired with plain yogurt, or blended into a smoothie. ♥

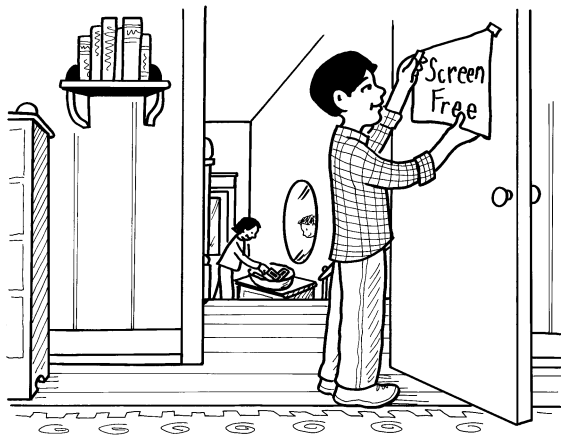


# Put away the screens

Are you concerned that your child is spending too much time on screens? You're not alone. Help him unplug with these four steps.

**1. Schedule it in.** Limit screen time to a few programs a week or a specific window of time. Your youngster can feel more in control by making his own calendar and blocking out his screen time. Then, encourage him to add in homework time, chores, reading time, and other activities.

**2. Find new pursuits.** Substitute active time for screen time by letting your child select a sport to explore, perhaps gymnastics or karate. To get the entire family involved,



**4. Design a screen-free bedroom.** Let your child arrange his room however he pleases—as long as he leaves the electronics elsewhere. He could choose the location for where they “sleep,” perhaps in a basket in the kitchen or by the front door. ●

hold regular non-screen events like charades, biking, or volunteering.

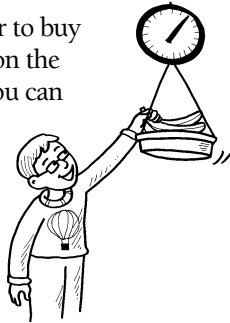
**3. Get creative.** Use your time together to inspire your youngster's imagination. Put away your own devices while you make crafts or sing songs, for instance. Your behavior will help shape his behavior.

## Q&A

### Organic quandary

**Q:** I see more and more organic fruits and vegetables in the grocery store. Are they really healthier? They can be so expensive!

**A:** Some people prefer to buy organic to cut down on the chemicals they eat. You can decide what makes the most difference and fits your budget. For example, pesticides aren't as likely to get through produce with thick coverings. So you might buy regular bananas, avocados, corn, pineapples, melons, grapefruit, and oranges.



On the other hand, more pesticides get through fruits and vegetables with edible or thin skin. You may opt for organic when buying celery, apples, strawberries, greens (lettuce, spinach, collard greens), or cherries.

*Note:* Whether you buy organic or conventional produce, wash all items (even melons) thoroughly before eating. ●

## ACTIVITY CORNER

### Winter walkabouts

Take your family on a walking tour of your city or town, and enjoy these active games.

**Story walking.** Your youngster begins a made-up story about something she sees along the route. At the next block, a second person picks up the storyline. A third storyteller takes over at block three, and so on. End the story after everyone has been a storyteller. Then, start a new tale.

**I Spy.** Choose a person to be the first “spy.” She picks an object or a place everyone can see and announces it with a clue: “I spy something that's round and encourages splashing.” Everybody takes turns asking yes-or-no questions until someone guesses correctly (a birdbath). That person leads a speed walk to the right location—and gets to be the next spy. ●



## IN THE KITCHEN

### One-pot wonders

It's comfort-food season! Keep warm with these easy one-pot meals.

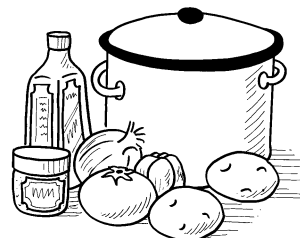
#### White turkey chili

Saute 1 chopped onion and 3 minced garlic cloves in 2 tbsp. oil in a large pot until soft. Add 1 lb. ground turkey and cook until browned. Stir in 2 tsp. ground cumin, 1 14.5-oz. can chickpeas (drained, rinsed), and 2 cups low-sodium vegetable broth. Bring to a boil, and reduce heat. Simmer for 15 minutes.

#### Cod in tomato broth

In a large pot, combine ½ red onion (thinly sliced), 1½ cups diced tomatoes, 4 small potatoes (cubed), 1 tsp. dried basil, and 4 cups low-sodium chicken broth. Bring to a boil, cover, and reduce heat. Simmer until potatoes are tender, about 10 minutes.

Add 4 skinless cod fillets to the pot, and replace cover. Simmer for about 7 minutes or until the fish is opaque and cooked through. ●



## OUR PURPOSE

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

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