

# Nutrition Nuggets

Food and Fitness for a Healthy Child

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West Allegheny School District  
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## BEST BITES



### Praise good choices

When your child eats well, tell her. You'll show her that you notice her healthy eating habits. "I'm proud of you for trying the green beans tonight!" "Yogurt is my favorite snack—I'm glad you like it, too!" Giving your youngster positive feedback will encourage her to continue making good food choices.

### DID YOU KNOW?

Children who are physically active have fewer health problems. That's because they are more likely to be at a healthy weight, to have stronger bones, and to have good cardiovascular fitness. Setting a pattern now will help your youngsters stay active and be healthier later in life.



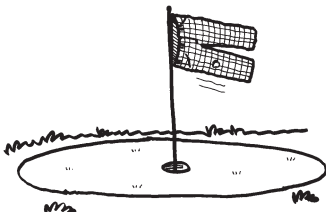
### Add fruits, vegetables

When you bring carryout meals home, add your own fruits and vegetables. For example, instead of ordering french fries, put out a bowl of raw baby carrots. Rather than getting milkshakes or parfaits, serve fresh blueberries or fruit cocktail cups (packed in their own juice).

### Just for fun

**Q:** Why did the golfer have an extra pair of pants?

**A:** In case he got a hole in one!



## Cook and learn

When children learn to cook, they also practice important skills for school. Use these ideas to give your youngster a boost in the classroom while she gets comfortable in the kitchen.



**Research.** Let your child look for healthy recipes in cookbooks or online. She can borrow library books like *The Everything Kids' Cookbook* (Sandra Nissenberg) or *Kids' Fun & Healthy Cookbook* (Nicola Graimes). Or she can enter ingredients you have on hand (ground beef, onions, ketchup) at a site like [www.epicurious.com](http://www.epicurious.com) to find a recipe for meat loaf or hamburgers.

**Vocabulary.** Reading through recipes will help your youngster develop a larger vocabulary. Encourage her to look up unfamiliar words in a dictionary or to use clues in nearby words to define them. For example, a smoothie recipe may say, "Puree the strawberries and bananas in a blender until they're

smooth." She might think about the words *blender* and *smooth* and realize that *puree* means to mash up something until it is soft.

**Math.** Let your child help with math problems as you cook together. Younger children might count out muffin liners for two dozen muffins. Older children can multiply fractions to double a recipe ( $2 \times \frac{3}{4}$  cup =  $1\frac{1}{2}$  cups). Or ask your youngster to figure out when a casserole will be done if you put it in the oven at 5:10 and it has to bake for 35 minutes. ♣

### Tip of the week

Want to get your whole family working together for good health? Here's a suggestion.

Each week, let a different family member decide on a healthy eating or exercise tip. *Examples:* Stop eating when you're full. Do jumping jacks during TV commercials.

Post the weekly tip on the refrigerator, and ask each person to make a tally mark when he follows it. Save the sheets in a folder marked "Our Healthy Family"—you'll have a reminder of ways your family can eat better and be more active.

*Idea:* Have your child add up the tally marks and report the results. Which tips are most successful for your family? ♣



# Be a nutrition detective

How can you help your youngster make healthy food decisions? Turn him into an “ingredient detective.”

1. Give him a magnifying glass, a small notebook, and a pencil to take when you go grocery shopping. He can use his magnifying glass to read the tiny print on ingredient lists of food packages and then jot down notes in his notebook.
2. Ask your child to compare different brands by counting the number of ingredients. Let him know that the fewer ingredients there are, the more likely the food is to be healthy.



3. Have him write down the first ingredient listed—that’s the one the package has the most of. Talk about how the top ingredients should be healthy foods like whole wheat, vegetables, or fruit.
4. Look at the ingredient list together. Are there big words that neither of you can recognize or pronounce? Those are probably chemical additives or preservatives.

*Idea:* Give your youngster a list of five “suspects” to watch for: hydrogenated oil, partially hydrogenated oil, high-fructose corn syrup, MSG (monosodium glutamate), and sodium nitrate. Ask him to alert you to foods containing those items, since they’re not likely to be very healthy. ♥

## ACTIVITY CORNER

### Hoop games

Spin it. Roll it. Jump into it. A hula hoop is a fun and inexpensive way to get your family moving. Try these activities:

- Challenge each other to do tricks while spinning the hula hoop. *Examples:* Stand on one foot, walk forward, walk backward, move in a circle, spin the hoop around your knees.

- Play Thread the Needle with family members or a group of friends. Stand in a circle



holding hands, with a hula hoop hanging from one person’s arm. That person has to step through the hoop to pass it to the next player—without letting go of anyone’s hand. The next player does the same thing, and so on until the hoop gets back to the first player.

- Hang a hula hoop from a tree branch or a clothesline. Have one player stand on each side, and throw a ball back and forth through the hoop. ♥



## PARENT TO PARENT

### Rake and play

Every fall, my husband and I used to spend several weekends raking leaves. Last year we came up with fun ways for our children to pitch in—and get exercise at the same time.

We borrowed rakes from neighbors so we would each have one. Then, we each chose an area and raked the leaves into piles. We left a path wide enough for the kids to kick a ball or ride a bike through. Next, we made an obstacle course with small piles to jump over and a zigzag section to run through.

Finally, we made a race out of bagging up the leaves. We set a timer to see how many bags each person could fill before the buzzer went off. We repeated our race until all the leaves were bagged. The kids had so much fun that now they can’t wait for the leaves to fall again! ♥



## IN THE KITCHEN

### Pumpkin season

A trip to the pumpkin patch can be a youngster’s favorite part of fall. Pumpkins are not only fun to pick out and decorate—they’re also delicious and healthy to eat. Try these ideas.

**Pumpkin enchiladas.** Mix 1/3 cup canned pumpkin with 2 tsp. low-sodium taco sauce. On a corn tortilla, layer 2 tbsp. low-sodium enchilada sauce, the pumpkin mixture, shredded low-fat cheddar cheese, mushroom slices, and chopped onions. Warm the tortilla slightly, roll, place on a nonstick cookie sheet, and bake for 8 minutes at 400°. Top with tomato salsa.

**Roasted pumpkin seeds.** Let your child help scoop the seeds from a pumpkin. Put them in a bowl of water for about an hour, and then rinse in a colander. Pat dry and toss with 2 tsp. olive oil. Spread on a cookie sheet. Bake at 250° until crisp and browned, about 40 minutes.

**Pumpkin sauce.** Stir together 2 cups canned pumpkin, 1/3 cup applesauce, 1 tbsp. lemon juice, 1/4 tsp. pumpkin pie spice, and 1/4 cup honey. Mix well. Serve as a side dish or a spread for whole-wheat toast. ♥



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