

# Nutrition Nuggets

Food and Fitness for a Healthy Child

November 2011

Spring Lake Park Schools



## BEST BITES

### Allergy tip

Is your child lactose intolerant or allergic to milk? Teach him to look for food packages marked “parve” or “pareve”—that means they contain no milk products. He can also find foods labeled “non-dairy,” but he should read the ingredient lists carefully. While they have no milk, butter, or cream, they may still contain milk proteins (watch for words like “caseinate” or “lactoglobulin”).

### DID YOU KNOW?

Swimming builds strength and endurance, works all muscle groups, and is easy on joints and bones.

Encourage your youngster to swim



year-round with trips to an indoor community pool. Or suggest that she sign up for a winter swim league. *Idea:* Join her in the pool and swim together, race against each other, or play tag.

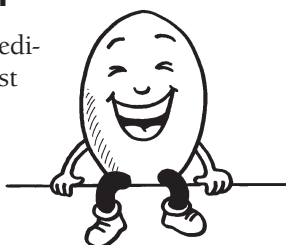
### Turkey treat

For a fun Thanksgiving snack, make “fruit turkeys.” Cut oranges in half, and scoop out the fruit. Then, let your child mix the orange sections with other fruit (grapes, banana slices, apple chunks) and put the mixture into the shells. He can turn each one into a turkey with a pretzel-stick neck, a pear-slice head, and dill feathers.

### Just for fun

**Q:** What ingredient works best when it’s broken?

**A:** An egg!



## Taste it!

As a parent, you want your children to eat a variety of foods. But getting them to try new ones isn’t always easy. Here are a few creative ways to encourage your youngsters to taste—and enjoy—new foods.

**Have a tasting party.** Pick a type of food, and conduct a taste test. For example, let your children pick out different pears at the market. Put slices of each kind on separate plates, and have them make signs for each one. Family members can sample the pears and write “tasting notes” (color, flavor, texture, rating on a scale of 1–5). Then, compare your findings.

**Serve samples.** Have you noticed how shoppers enjoy tasting samples at food stores—and often buy them afterward? Place samples of healthy foods around your kitchen, and invite your youngsters to try them after school. *Tip:* Spear each sample with a toothpick to make tasting even more fun.



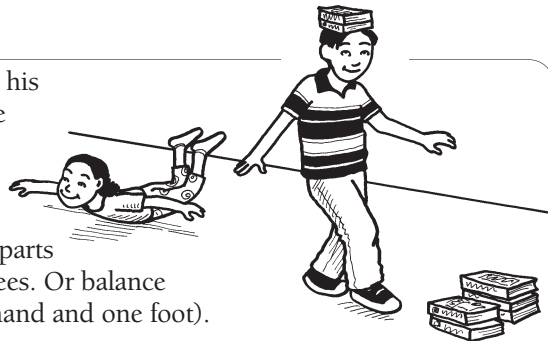
**Stage a contest.** Select a few ingredients, including a new one you would like your children to try (a vegetable, for instance). Then, divide into teams, give each side the same ingredients, and set a timer. The challenge is to arrange or prepare a dish using just those items. When the buzzer goes off, sample each other’s creations.

*Note:* Don’t get discouraged if your youngsters don’t like a new food right away. It can take many tastings—even up to 10 or 12—before children develop a taste for a new food. ♥

## Balancing act

Can your youngster balance on his knees? On his stomach? Challenge him with these balancing activities—they’re a fun way to build coordination and overall fitness.

- Try balancing on different body parts such as your side, stomach, or knees. Or balance on two different body parts (one hand and one foot).
- Stack paperback books at each end of a room. Walk to one stack, pick up a book, and place it on your head. Walk to the other stack, and add another book. How many books can you pile on your head before they drop off?
- Hold hands with someone, and balance on one foot each. Come up with other combinations for balancing together (one person on his back, the other on his knees). *Idea:* With three or more people, build a human pyramid. ♥



# Be a food writer

A fun way to explore good eating is to write about healthy foods. Suggest that your youngster try these ideas.

## Create a menu

What's for dinner tonight? On a sheet of construction paper, your child can list and describe the items. Encourage him to point out the nutrition



benefits of each (example: "Bright orange carrots filled with vitamins that are good for your eyes and your skin"). Put the menu on the dinner table for everyone to read. *Idea:* Have him create the menu on a computer and make copies to put at each person's place.

## Write a food tale

Encourage your youngster to write a story featuring healthy foods. He might make up characters like Ada the Avocado or Cauliflower Chris who get lost in Foodland and have to find their way back to the produce market. Or give him a story starter like, "If I were a banana, I would..."

*Note:* Younger children can dictate words or stories to you, or have them draw pictures and add letters and words they know. ♥

## ACTIVITY CORNER

### Catch, throw, and play

Many sports and games call for catching and throwing a ball. Here are ways to give your child everyday practice:

- For little ones, start by tossing bean bags back and forth. They can be easier for small hands to grasp.
- Practice throwing "grounders" to each other. Roll a ball to your youngster, and have him scoop it up and throw it back to you.
- Encourage your child to play with balls of different sizes and shapes (tennis ball, basketball, wiffle ball, playground ball, football, small rubber ball). This will get him used to handling and reacting to balls for various games.
- Stand 2–3 feet apart, and throw a ball to your youngster. After he catches it, he can take a giant step back. Continue tossing a ball to each other and stepping back with each catch. How far apart can you get and still catch the ball?

● Suggest that your child throw a ball up in the air and catch it. How many times can he throw and catch without dropping the ball? *Tip:* Have him practice baseball skills by wearing a baseball mitt on one hand and tossing a baseball with the other. ♥

**O U R P U R P O S E**

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

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## Q & A Bullying and weight

**Q:** My daughter Rachel came home in tears because other kids told her she's "too fat" to play with them during recess. What should we do?

**A:** First, listen carefully to her concerns. Then, talk to her teacher and the school counselor. They can give Rachel ways to handle teasing and bullying. For example, if she doesn't get angry or upset, she can take the "fun" out of teasing, and the bullies may give up after a while.

Also, watch for signs that your daughter is sad, spends too much time alone, or doesn't have friends. And make sure she knows you love her and value her interests and abilities.

Finally, try not to dwell on her weight. Instead, keep healthy foods in the house, and help encourage physical activity by playing outside together or taking family bike rides and walks. The important thing is to get her in the habit of being active no matter what her peers say. You'll help her build a lifetime habit of fitness. ♥



## IN THE KITCHEN Spaghetti or squash?

If your children have never had spaghetti squash, they're in for a treat. It's a vegetable that looks like spaghetti! And the good nutrition news: it has no fat or cholesterol, is low in calories, and is a good source of fiber, vitamin C, and minerals.

To cook a spaghetti squash, pierce holes in it, and bake at 350° until tender (about an hour). Cool 10–15 minutes, cut in half lengthwise, and scoop out the seeds. Let your children scrape out the flesh with a fork—it will come out as spaghetti-like strands.

Then, try these ideas:

- Drizzle on a little olive oil, and add Parmesan cheese. Season with pepper.
- Toss with your favorite marinara sauce.
- Sauté chopped onions, minced garlic, and sliced mushrooms until soft.

Stir into the spaghetti squash strands, and place in a casserole dish. Bake at 400° until hot.

- Mix with apple chunks (from 2 apples), 1 tbs. melted butter, and 2 tbs. maple syrup. Bake at 350° until hot. ♥

