

# Nutrition Nuggets

Food and Fitness for a Healthy Child

May 2016

Lower Township Elementary Schools



## BEST BITES

### An active summer

As you and your child plan her summer days, be sure to build in physical activity. If you're enrolling her in day care or summer programs, consider choosing one with at least an hour of outdoor play, sports, or dance. If she prefers art and music programs, try to make time for backyard games and trips to the playground.

### Give a hug

Whether you want to celebrate something great your youngster has done or console him when he's sad, give him attention and a hug rather than food. Rewarding or consoling with treats can begin a lifelong habit of eating to feel good about himself. *Tip:* Also avoid punishing with food. Withholding dessert, for example, sends a message that sweets are a reward for being good.



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## DID YOU KNOW?

If your children get free or reduced-price meals at school, they might also be eligible for free meals over the summer. These meals may be provided at schools, parks, community centers, houses of worship, or migrant centers. To find a Summer Food Service Program site near you, ask in your school office or call 866-3-HUNGRY or 877-8-HAMBRE.

### Just for fun

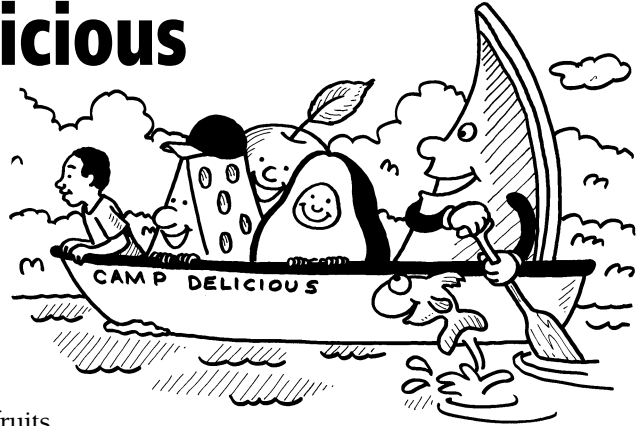
**Q:** Why did the gardener plant his money?



**A:** To make the soil rich.

## Camp delicious

Summer is around the corner and, with it, fantastic opportunities for showcasing healthy foods and getting your youngster used to eating fresh foods that are good for him. Try these ideas.



### Take the combo

Pair your child's favorite fruits with calcium-rich cheese in these winning combinations. Cut a peach in half, and fill with cottage cheese. Or gently toss seedless watermelon chunks with crumbled feta, arugula, and a drizzle of balsamic vinegar. Another idea is to layer blueberries and ricotta cheese in a clear glass for a pretty parfait—add raspberries or sliced strawberries for a red-white-and-blue dessert on the Fourth of July.

### Raise the bar

Put heart-healthy "good" fats into your youngster's diet with avocados any time of day. You could dice them into scrambled eggs for breakfast or slice them into a lunchtime turkey sandwich. And here's a fun option for dinner: Create an "avocado bar." Put out avocado halves, along with

bowls of cooked, lean ground beef, shredded cheddar or crumbled cotija cheese, chopped tomato, canned black beans (drained, rinsed), and salsa. Your child can assemble his own meal-in-an-avocado!

### Go fishing

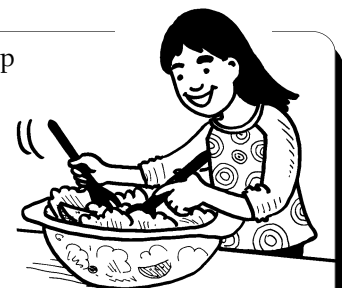
Experts recommend at least two servings of seafood a week. These kid-friendly versions will have your youngster asking to "go fish" at least that often. Roast shrimp (6–8 minutes in a 400° oven), and thread onto toothpicks. Or make "fish burgers." Grill flounder or cod fillets. Tuck each portion into a warmed whole-wheat pita with lettuce, sliced pickles, and squirts of mustard and ketchup. ●

## Build character with family meals

Family meals are not just an opportunity to develop healthy eating habits. They're also a time to develop good character. Here's how.

**Let me help.** Encourage responsibility by giving your child mealtime chores. She might prepare a salad, set the table, or pour water into glasses. When she offers to do new jobs, she'll be learning to take initiative, too.

**Thanks for dinner.** Teach your youngster to show appreciation for the cook. Adults can model this by thanking whoever prepares dinner each evening—inspiring your child to do the same. *Tip:* Explain that she should say thank you to the school cafeteria staff each day when she gets her breakfast or lunch, too. ●



# Food + fitness + learning

Over summer break, children often lose some of the academic skills they've gained during the school year. Help stop the "summer slide" with fun activities like these that combine food, fitness, and learning.

**Reading.** Together, choose books about food or sports for reading at bedtime—or anytime. Your youngster might enjoy funny stories about picky eaters (with messages about how *not* to be one), nonfiction picture books on where food comes from, biographies of athletes, or sports records books. Ask your librarian for suggestions.



**Writing.** Suggest that your child keep a "fitness diary." She could write about the activities she does every day and note her accomplishments. *Example:* "I jumped rope for a half-hour today. And I jumped 47 times without missing! Tomorrow, I'm going to try for 50." She'll practice writing, and setting goals will encourage her to reach higher.

**Math and science.** At the grocery store, ask your youngster to compare nutrition labels and pick the healthiest products. She'll work on reading tables and figuring out which numbers are higher and lower. Then, cook together. She'll count and measure, and she'll see science in action as she observes changes in states of matter (melting, solidifying) or chemical reactions (cakes rising, meat browning). ♡

## Q&A Talking about weight

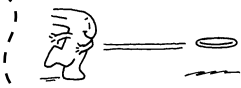
**Q:** My third-grader is overweight, and I don't know how to talk to her about it without making her feel bad about herself. What advice can you give me?

**A:** Try to keep the emphasis on being healthy rather than on looking a certain way.

Often the key is simply in the words you use. For example, don't use words like "fat," "overweight," "heavy," "obese," or "chunky." Instead, talk about getting to a "healthier weight." Rather than "exercise," use "play" or "active."



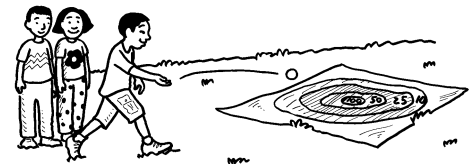
Also, make your comments apply to the whole family so you're not calling attention just to her. She should understand that it's important for everyone to eat healthfully, get exercise, and stay at a healthy weight. For more help, consult her doctor, a registered dietitian, a nutritionist, or the school nurse. ♡



## ACTIVITY CORNER

### Paint and play

With these two ideas, your youngster can paint and then play his own outdoor games!



### Disappearing hopscotch

Let your child use a paintbrush and bucket of water to paint a hopscotch board on a driveway, sidewalk, or playground blacktop. His challenge is to hop to each block before his board disappears. *Idea:* He and a friend could each paint a hopscotch board and race to the finish.

### Bull's-eye target

Help your youngster paint a big bull's-eye on an old sheet. Have him put a point value on each ring: blue = 10, red = 25, yellow = 50, black bull's-eye = 100. Lay the sheet on the ground. Stand back, and take turns tossing a tennis ball toward the bull's-eye. If it lands on a ring, score the points. Play to 250. ♡

## IN THE KITCHEN

### Make your own pops

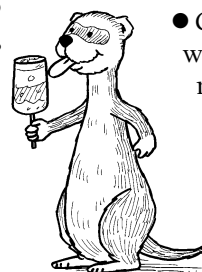
Slice, puree, layer, and freeze—your child will flip over these homemade ice pops. They're healthier, and tastier, than the boxed versions.

*Note:* For each recipe, divide the mixtures into small paper cups, and insert craft sticks. Freeze. To eat, simply peel off the cups, and turn upside down!

- Slice half of a mango, and cut the other half into cubes. In a blender or food processor, puree the cubes with 2 tsp. sugar. Combine with 1 container plain or

mango Greek yogurt. In the cups, layer the mango slices and the puree.

- Slice a peach or nectarine. Layer with halved strawberries. Pour in 100 percent apple or white grape juice to cover the fruit.
- Cut 1 pineapple into pieces. Puree with 1 cup light canned coconut milk. Stir in ½ cup coconut flakes.
- In a blender, puree 1 small container plain Greek yogurt, ⅔ cup orange juice concentrate (frozen, thawed), 2 bananas, and 1 tbsp. lime juice. ♡



## 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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