Nutrition Nuggets™

Food and Fitness for a Healthy Child

Penns Grove Carneys Point Regional District
Ms. Colleen Green, Food Services Director

BEST BITES

Healthy shopping

When you go to the grocery store, "shop the perimeter" first. The outside aisles are where you'll usually find fresh produce, healthy dairy products (milk, yogurt, and cheese), and fresh meats, chicken, and fish. Fill your cart mostly with those items, and then get what you need from the middle of the store.

Kangaroo hop

Try this fitness idea from Down Under. Have your children hop like kangaroos by jumping with both feet and holding their hands in front of their chests. They can race each other by hopping from one end of a room (or yard) to the other. Or they could take turns being the leader and play Follow the Kangaroo.

DID YOU KNOW? Research shows that students who skip breakfast have shorter attention spans and don't do as well on tests. Make sure your youngster gets up in time to have a nutritious breakfast either at home or at school. *Tip:* If she's having trouble waking up early enough, move her bedtime back.

Just for fun

Q: What's the worst thing about being an octopus?

A: Washing your hands before meals!

Snack attack

"I'm starving!" When your child bursts through the door after school or activities, she's probably hungry. Try these tips for healthy snacks that will give her the energy she needs to play and do homework.

Stock the kitchen

Whatever is in the house is what your youngster will eat—so shop with that in mind. Get interesting fruits and vegetables in different colors. Buy mango or peach salsa, and let your child dip in veggie sticks (carrot, celery, jicama). Stock popcorn to air pop (rather than getting less healthy microwave popcorn). Then, offer her choices. She'll have a say in what she eats, but she'll be choosing only from healthy foods.

Have a mini-meal

Breakfast or lunch foods can make a good snack. You could serve oatmeal with bananas and cinnamon or tuck scrambled eggs into a pita pocket. Or try individual pizzas on whole-wheat English muffins. Top each half with a little tomato sauce, shredded low-fat mozzarella cheese, and vegetables (sliced mushrooms, chopped onions), then bake until the cheese melts.

Build your own

Let your youngster get creative in the kitchen, and she'll be likely to eat the results. She can make kebabs by threading fruit (grapes, melon chunks) and cheese cubes onto toothpicks. Put out cookie cutters for her to cut sandwiches into fun shapes. Or she could spread cream cheese on rice cakes or apple slices and decorate them with raisins or dried cranberries.

Feeling good about sports

Participating in sports can build your youngster up… or drag him down. Make athletics a positive experience for him with these strategies:

- Keep games in perspective. At this age, sports should be about having fun and developing skills. Ask about his favorite part of practice or the most interesting play in the game, rather than focusing on his performance or the score.
- Encourage your child to set goals — but make sure the goals are realistic. He might aim to touch the ball three times during a game or to try a move that he's been working on.
- Avoid comments about your youngster's size or body. Concentrate on the friends he is making and the effort he is putting forth ("I love how you tried to get the rebound").

© 2017 Resources for Educators, a division of CCH Incorporated

This institution is an equal opportunity provider.