

# Nutrition Nuggets

Food and Fitness for a Healthy Child

February 2014

## BEST BITES



### After-school programs

Sign-ups are probably starting now for spring after-school activities. Look at the lineup with your youngster, and consider a nutrition-related program. Her school might have a gardening club, or your community center may offer a kids' cooking class. Being involved in growing and cooking healthy foods can get her excited about eating them!

### Enjoy a rainbow

Work with your child to plan meals that include a variety of colors. For instance, you could serve orange carrots and brown rice at dinner or white chicken strips and yellow pineapple chunks at lunch. During meals, take turns calling out a color to have next. As your youngster eats the colors, he will get a good variety of vitamins and minerals.

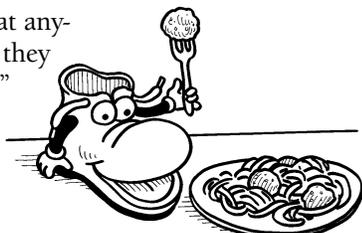
### Be active indoors



For a fun change of pace this winter, let your children bring outdoor toys inside. Suggest that they jump on a pogo stick in the basement, roller-skate in a garage "rink," or play badminton (without the net) in a bedroom. Mixing things up like this can inspire them to get more physical activity.

### Just for fun

**Sign in a cafeteria:** "Shoes are required to eat in the cafeteria. Socks can eat anyplace they want."



Suffolk Public Schools  
Mr. Brian K. Williams, Supervisor of FNS

## Making good choices

How does your child decide what to eat? At this age, his choices are influenced by the food you buy, where you keep it, and how much you serve for meals and snacks. Consider these strategies for making your home a "healthy eating zone."

### At the store

Food decisions at home all start with what's there in the first place. If you buy three kinds of cookies or three flavors of ice cream, your youngster will want to taste them all. Instead, bring home three kinds of fruits and three kinds of vegetables. Likewise, skip the soda and fruit drink aisle. When the only choices are water or fat-free milk, that's what your child will drink when he's thirsty.

### Front and center

Your youngster will most likely snack on the foods he sees. Keep a bowl of fruit on the kitchen table. Cut up vegetables, and put them at the front of the refrigerator shelf at his eye level. Freeze grapes in small bags on the freezer shelf he can



reach. On the flip side, if you buy chips, cookies, or candy, place them out of sight. If he doesn't see them, he's less apt to eat them.

### Serving sizes

It's no secret restaurant portion sizes have grown larger. What you may not know is that serving sizes at home are bigger, too. Try plating meals yourself with smaller amounts, and put away leftovers. Use smaller dishes and utensils—eating stews or pudding with a teaspoon rather than a tablespoon will cut down on how much everyone eats. ●

## Games for snow (or no snow)

When your children wake up to a snow day, make the most of it with these active ideas.

**Treasure hunts.** To encourage your kids to run around in the snow, have them take turns burying a plastic toy and shouting out clues for the others to find it. *No snow?* Hide the toy in bushes, in tall grass, or behind a shed.

**Colorful trails.** Let your children fill spray bottles with water and food coloring. Then, they can make colorful trails for each other to follow. *No snow?* Spray the color onto grass (it will wash away in the rain), or make trails with pebbles. ●



# Yikes—yeast is alive!

Your youngster may not know that her bread is “alive.” Have her experiment with a main ingredient in bread—the live organism known as yeast—and she’ll learn more about the foods she eats.

**1.** Ask your child to empty a yeast packet onto dark construction paper and examine it with a magnifying glass. Does it move or look alive?



What happened? The bubbles are carbon dioxide, the gas produced when the yeast “eats” the sugar. The movement is the yeast making more yeast as the chemical reaction continues.

Show your youngster a few pieces of bread. If she looks closely, she will find the bubbles baked right in—making the bread lighter and fluffier. ♥

**2.** Let her pour the yeast into a bowl and add 1 tsp. sugar and  $\frac{1}{4}$  cup warm water.

**3.** Have her wait 20 minutes and observe (she’ll see bubbles in the mixture). She can pour the mixture back onto the dark paper and look with a magnifying glass again (she’ll see movement).

## ACTIVITY CORNER

### Everyday activity boosts

Small bursts of activity will help your child reach the recommended 60 minutes of daily physical activity. Try these suggestions:

- Encourage him to walk, Rollerblade, bike, or ride a scooter everywhere that he can. If you live close enough, you could travel by “foot power” to the bank, a store, or friends’ houses.

- Typically, you want to get through chores as quickly as possible. Not so with this idea.



Have your youngster deliver folded laundry piece by piece to its destination (his drawer, the linen closet). He can count his trips—and multiply his exercise!

- When you drive to the library, community center, or mall, park far from the entrance and “take a hike” to the front door. Or park in one central location in town, and walk to your different errands. Your child just might get into a lifelong habit of walking extra steps. ♥

## Q & A Price of healthy food

**Q:** It seems like healthy food costs more. Is that really true?

**A:** While it might be that way sometimes, it depends on what you get and how you shop. In fact, some produce can cost less than snacks like chocolate candy or chips, and you’ll save on sugar and fats in addition to money. For instance, a bunch of bananas might work out to 25 cents per banana—less than the price of most packaged snacks. And a 5-lb. bag of potatoes will cost only a little more than one order of French fries at the drive-thru.

To keep prices down, purchase fruits and vegetables in season, or buy them frozen. “Join” your supermarket so you get member prices, and be sure to use coupons. Also, buying in bulk could save you money on cereal, nuts, seeds, and other healthy items. If those quantities are too much for your family, try shopping at a warehouse store with a neighbor and splitting the amounts. ♥



## IN THE KITCHEN

### Make-ahead breakfast “cupcakes”



Making breakfast can be challenging on busy mornings. Instead, whip up these savory cupcakes with your child on a weekend, and freeze them. Then, pop them in the microwave for a hot and healthy breakfast.

*Note:* For each recipe, use a 12-cup muffin pan with liners or coated with nonfat cooking spray. Freeze the cupcakes in the pan until solid, and then store them in a freezer bag.

#### Oatmeal

In a saucepan, combine 2 cups rolled oats and  $3\frac{1}{2}$  cups water, and bring to a boil. Boil, stirring frequently, for 3–5 minutes. Mix in 1 tbsp. honey

or brown sugar. Spoon the oatmeal into the muffin tin, and add raisins, dried cherries or cranberries, chopped nuts, or pumpkin seeds to each cup.

#### Eggs

Beat a dozen eggs, and stir in a 20-oz. bag of shredded hash brown-style potatoes (thawed, if frozen), 1 cup shredded mozzarella cheese, 1 chopped bell pepper, and 4 tbsp. flour. Divide the mixture into the muffin cups. Bake at 400° for 25–30 minutes, until set. ♥

## OUR PURPOSE

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

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ISSN 1935-4630