

# Nutrition Nuggets

Food and Fitness for a Healthy Child

January 2009

Littleton Public Schools

## BEST BITES

### Healthier treats

When your youngster has dessert, make it a little lighter with these tips. Serve a single scoop of ice cream in a bowl instead of a cone. Cut a smaller wedge of pie. Split a cupcake. Let him dip several low-fat cookies in fat-free milk—and then drink the milk for a healthy dose of calcium.



### DID YOU KNOW?

Children with asthma breathe more easily when they're physically fit. Encourage activities like sprinting, gymnastics, and baseball. They're less likely to trigger attacks since they require short bursts of energy rather than constant effort. Talk to your youngster's doctor about ways



to control asthma during play, and be sure to share details with teachers and coaches.

### More magnesium

Eating foods rich in magnesium helps keep your child's heart healthy and her bones and immune system strong. Good sources include halibut, beans, nuts, spinach, potatoes, cereals like bran and instant oatmeal, bananas, and kiwi. Try for 130 mg daily for kids 4–8 and 240 mg for ages 9–13.

### Just for fun

**Q:** What happens when you tell an egg a joke?

**A:** It cracks up.



## Pyramid power

What's orange, green, red, blue, purple, and yellow and helps youngsters eat better? Answer: the food pyramid for kids.

Introduce your child to this tool, and she'll learn how to take more responsibility for eating a healthy diet.



### Check it out

Start by looking over the pyramid together. Point out the food groups (grains, vegetables, fruits, milk, meat and beans) and the daily recommended quantities. Post a copy of the pyramid on the refrigerator, and attach sticky notes to the bottom. Each day, your youngster can make tally marks for the foods she eats from each group. *Note:* Find the pyramid in a book like *Fun with the Food Pyramid for Kids* (George Roby) or online at [www.mypyramid.gov/kids](http://www.mypyramid.gov/kids).

### Riddle this

Perfect for the car or dinner table, riddles will keep your youngster thinking about healthy foods. Take turns posing them, making sure you rotate through each section of the pyramid. *Examples:* "I'm white or brown outside and white and yellow inside. I'm in the protein group. What am I?" (an egg) "I'm long and yellow, and monkeys love me. I'm in the fruit group. What am I?" (a banana)

### Play games

Computer games are a fun way to help your child remember the foods that make up each group. For example, she can "blast off" into space by fueling a rocket ship with activities and healthy foods ([http://teammnutrition.usda.gov/resources/game/BlastOff\\_Game.html](http://teammnutrition.usda.gov/resources/game/BlastOff_Game.html)).

Have her Google "food pyramid games" to find other games. *Tip:* If you don't have a computer at home, she can play at the library. ♥

## Healthy fund-raisers

The next time your child's school or sports team is planning a fund-raiser, consider suggesting healthy alternatives to candy or cookie dough sales. Here are several options:

**1.** Host a jog-a-thon or hoop-a-thon. Participants run or shoot baskets for pledged amounts per block or basket.

**2.** Hold a car wash or pet wash. Scrubbing cars and shampooing dogs will give kids an active afternoon while raising money.



**3.** Sell plants or flower bulbs, team sweatshirts, or magazine subscriptions.

*Safety Note:* Be sure that children sell to people they know (relatives, friends) and avoid door-to-door sales. ♥

# Snow days

“Look, Mom! It’s snowing out!”

When your child wakes up to snowflakes falling outside his window, add to the excitement with these ideas. He’ll get exercise and have a great time too!

- See who can jump the farthest forward, backward, and sideways in the snow. Mound snow into hurdles, and jump over them.
- Build snow castles. Using sand buckets and shovels, your youngster can make a frozen version of his summer sand castles.



- Have snow races. Help your child scoop out snow into a racetrack down a small hill. He can time how long it takes toy cars or balls to make it to the bottom.
- Tie a hula hoop to a tree as a target. Make snowballs, stand back, and try to throw them through the hoop.

- Roll a huge snowball. Your youngster can start with a little bit of snow and roll and roll until it’s gigantic!

*Note:* If it doesn’t snow where you live, try variations like jumping over hurdles (upside-down buckets, crates, and small trash cans) or racing toy cars down a grassy hill. ♥



## ACTIVITY CORNER Tangled-up math

Math + movement = fun in this active family game.

*You’ll need:* 4 poster boards, ruler, markers, masking tape



Using the ruler and markers, divide each poster board into a dozen boxes. In each box, write a math equation ( $11 + 7 = \underline{\quad}$ ,  $4 \times 4 = \underline{\quad}$ ). Make the problems harder for older children, easier for younger ones. Then, tape the poster boards to the floor side by side.

Take turns calling out math problems to each other. With a correct answer, put a part of your body (hand, foot) on that box. If the answer is wrong, your turn is over. Continue solving math problems and placing body parts (elbow, head) on the boxes. The game ends when you can’t make another move—or you fall over laughing! ♥

## PARENT TO PARENT

### Breakfast for dinner

The other day I was telling my neighbor Carol how my kids were tired of our regular dinners of chicken or beef. Carol said she sometimes serves breakfast food for dinner, and her family loves it. What a great idea, I thought.

So the next night I surprised my family with a dinner of blueberry pancakes and turkey bacon. The kids were so excited that we decided to have breakfast for dinner one night a week. We make sure it’s a balanced meal by including a vegetable and fruit and some kind of protein (eggs, meat, beans, or nuts).

So far we’ve had waffle-and-peanut butter sandwiches, oatmeal with bananas and pecans, and breakfast burritos. The kids’ favorite? Build-your-own omelet night, where they got to choose fillings like mushrooms, onions, ham, or cheese. ♥



## IN THE KITCHEN

### Twist on tuna

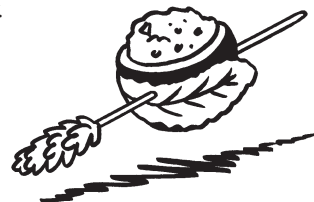
Tuna fish is rich in lean protein, vitamins, and minerals—and the best part is that most kids love it! Try these everyday ideas for a change of pace from tuna sandwiches.

**Meltaways.** Mix 1 can water-packed tuna (drained) with light mayonnaise. Spoon onto whole-wheat English muffin halves, and add sliced apples or pears. Cover with low-fat cheese (Swiss, Monterey Jack). Broil until brown and bubbly.

**Small bites.** Slice the top off of cherry tomatoes, scoop out the insides, and fill with tuna salad. Wrap

each tomato in a lettuce leaf, and use a frilly toothpick to hold the “bite” together.

**Tacos.** In a nonstick pan, combine 1 large can tuna with  $\frac{1}{2}$  package low-salt taco seasoning and  $\frac{1}{4}$  cup water. Stir until the mixture is warm and no water remains. Spoon into taco shells along with salsa, lettuce, and shredded cheddar cheese. ♥



## OUR PURPOSE

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

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