

Longwood Central School District

Alicia Smith, Director of Health, PE and Athletics

## BEST BITES

### Nutritious and on sale

Each time you get a new grocery advertising circular, let your child cut out pictures of healthy foods he wants to eat that week. He could glue them on paper to make an illustrated grocery list. Then, he can use his list when you go to the store or shop online together.

### Be an example

Your youngster watches what you do. So if you go for a run or a bike ride, mention it to her. Or better yet, invite her to join you! Take walks with her after dinner, follow along with a yoga video, or announce that it's time for morning stretches. You'll put her on the path toward developing a lifelong fitness habit.



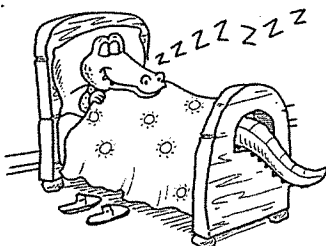
### DID YOU KNOW?

Many beans and other legumes are “two-fers”—they belong to both the protein and vegetable food groups. To add more legumes to your child’s diet, use pinto beans in tacos, toss chickpeas into salads, and stir lentils into soups. *Note:* Green beans, green lima beans, and green peas count only as vegetables.

### Just for fun

**Q:** Why do you go to bed every night?

**A:** Because your bed won’t come to you.



## A healthy start

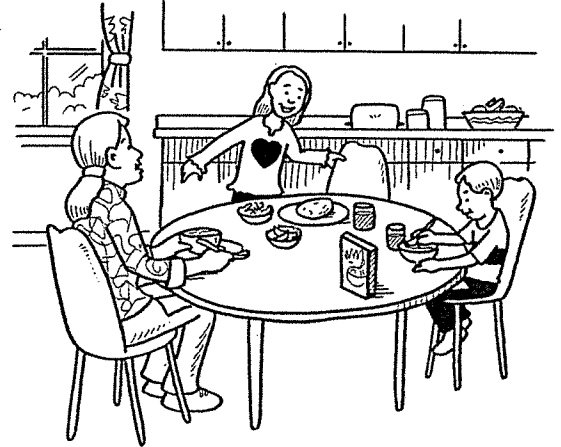
Many things may have changed in your youngster’s world this year, but here’s one that remains the same: She needs a balanced diet to stay healthy. Here are answers to questions you might have as the new school year gets in full swing.

**Q:** *My daughter says she’s not hungry for breakfast when she wakes up. What can I do?*

**A:** A complete breakfast gives your child energy and helps her focus in school. Have her do the rest of her morning routine before she eats, or let her eat in school if that’s an option. Also, she may be more interested if she gets to eat something other than breakfast foods. You could heat up last night’s leftovers, or microwave a baked potato and let her pick the toppings.

**Q:** *My child wants to snack all day when she’s home. How can I encourage good habits?*

**A:** Your daughter may not be eating enough at meals if she’s hungry soon afterward. Discourage snacking 1–2 hours before each meal so she comes to



the table with a healthy appetite. When she does snack, suggest healthy options like snap peas or pumpkin seeds.

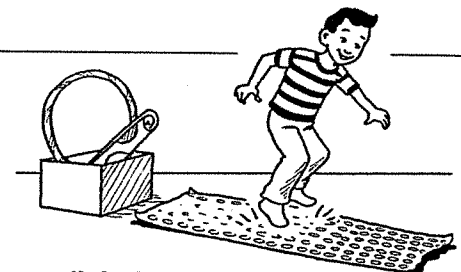
**Q:** *We’ve been eating at home a lot more lately. Any tips for making family meals more interesting?*

**A:** Ask your youngster to think of fun themes, such as Macaroni Monday or Souper Saturday. Or if you normally like going out for Thai or Mexican food, look up recipes for your favorite dishes and make them together. When the weather is nice, you might find a nice spot and eat outdoors. ♡

## Gym-in-a-box

Encourage your child to get more physical activity with a portable “gym.” Let him fill a big box or bin with fun equipment, then find creative ways to use it. Share these ideas to get him started.

- **Bubble wrap.** See how fast you can pop all the bubbles with your feet.
- **Twister mat.** Starting with each hand or foot on separate circles, do cartwheels or crab walks (walking on all fours—but upside down).
- **Hula-hoop.** Lay the hoop on the floor, and jump in and out of it 10 times. ♡



# Creative cooking for kids

Want to boost the odds that your child will eat healthy foods? Do kid-friendly activities like these.

**Play with shapes.** Let your youngster use cookie cutters to make shapes from food. He might be more apt to eat spinach and mushroom quesadillas if they're shaped like dinosaurs. Or maybe he'll try cucumber and cream cheese sandwiches if he gets to cut them into star shapes.

**Add color.** Does your child hesitate over whole grains? Try this. Ask him to squish



raspberries or blueberries in a colander and strain the juice into a bowl. Now let him stir the berry pieces, along with some whole berries, into batter for whole-grain pancakes or muffins. Be sure to save the "dye" so he can use a pastry brush to paint his cooked treat with the fruit juice!

**Make pictures.** Suggest that your youngster create a masterpiece on his plate. Offer a few healthy foods—including some he enjoys and others he's not as keen on. He might make low-fat cottage cheese "clouds" and a pineapple "sun" shining down on a field of "flowers" with green bean "stems" and strawberry "petals." ♡



## PARENT TO PARENT

### Smart swaps

During the spring and summer, we took fewer trips to the grocery store, which meant we didn't always have the ingredients we needed. The good news is, I learned to swap in different ingredients, and sharing my discoveries with my son Blake has helped him be more flexible about what he eats.

I asked Blake to make a chart labeled "Don't have that? Use this!" For example, when we ran out of butter to bake oatmeal raisin cookies,

I used an equal amount of mashed over-ripe bananas instead. When we didn't have

pasta or ground beef, I made couscous, stirred in pasta sauce, and heated up frozen turkey meatballs to put on top.

Each time we substitute an ingredient, Blake adds it to the chart so we remember for next time. We often discover that foods taste just as good—and sometimes even better—with a creative swap. ♡

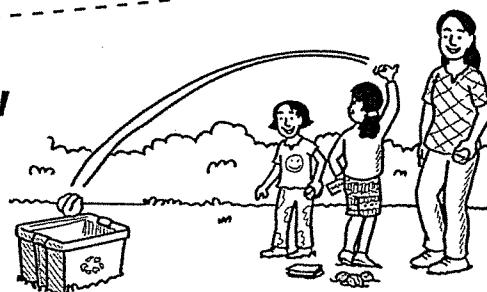


## ACTIVITY CORNER

### Aim and throw

Help your youngster get exercise and improve her throwing skills with these backyard games.

**Materials:** 10 beanbags (or balled-up pairs of socks), empty recycling bin or other large container



**1. Underhand, overhand.** Have your child stand 10 feet from the bin, and set a timer while she throws the beanbags underhanded into it. Throw back to her any that land on the ground. She must catch them and throw them into the bin—this time throwing overhanded. How quickly can she sink all 10 bags?

**2. Throwing challenges.** Ask your youngster to write five challenges on separate index cards. *Examples:* "Use the hand you don't normally throw with." "Lift one leg and throw under it." "Throw backward over your shoulder." Take turns selecting a card and using that motion to throw a beanbag into the bin (from 10 feet away). The first person to complete all of the throws wins. ♡

## IN THE KITCHEN

### Rice bowls

For an easy, healthy approach to dinner, get the whole family involved. Just cook a batch of brown rice, and try these build-your-own rice bowls.

#### Put an egg on it

**Add:** raw vegetables (shredded carrots, baby kale leaves, diced cucumbers, thinly sliced scallions) and a sunny-side-up egg

**Top with:** sesame seeds and a drizzle of low-sodium soy sauce

#### Burrito in a bowl

**Add:** cooked black beans, halved pitted black olives, and low-fat shredded cheddar cheese

**Top with:** avocado chunks and salsa

#### How about some hummus?

**Add:** mixed oven-roasted vegetables, such as brussels sprouts, broccoli, butternut squash, and sweet potatoes

**Top with:** hummus sauce (slowly whisk warm water into hummus until it's the consistency of salad dressing) ♡



## OUR PURPOSE

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

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128 N. Royal Avenue • Front Royal, VA 22630  
800-394-5052 • rfeustomer@wolterskluwer.com  
www.rfeonline.com

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# Picky Eater? Not Me!



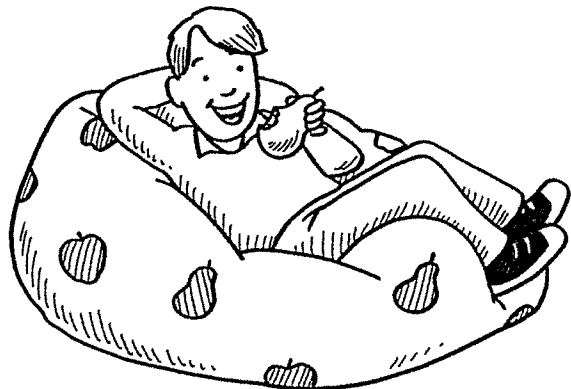
Looking to add variety to your children's diets so they get all the nutrients they need? Tap into their sense of adventure and creativity to guide them toward trying new foods. They may find that eating more foods can be tasty—and fun!

## Start small

Approaching your youngster with a small amount of a new food may work better than giving her a full serving. If she only sees a little on her plate, she's more likely to give it a taste. Let her see you eating the food that you want her to try—your example will mean the most to her. *Idea:* Many children are sensitive to new foods touching the rest of their meal. Try putting small pieces of the new item in a little bowl on your child's plate.

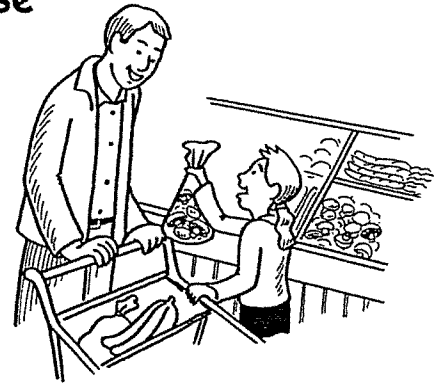
## Make it familiar

Think about foods your youngster already enjoys. Then, look for some that are similar. For instance, if he likes green Granny Smith apples, bring home green Bartlett pears for him to try one day. If he loves cheeseburgers, experiment with turkey or veggie burgers. Or if he's a fast-food chicken nugget fan, make baked chicken nuggets (and even baked fish sticks) at home. *Idea:* Serve new foods with something your child already likes. Maybe you can add chopped, steamed broccoli to macaroni and cheese or put a tomato slice in his grilled cheese.



## Let her choose

Your youngster is more apt to sample a new food if she picks it out. At the grocery store, have her decide on a new food each trip. She might select something interesting in the produce section, like avocado, eggplant, or pomegranate. Or ask her to choose a new variety of beans, such as cannellini or garbanzo. *Idea:* Let your child come up with a chart to mark her food explorations. For example, she could draw a picture of each new food item and then add a face for her reaction—maybe a half-smile or a full smile.



## Try, try again

Did you know it can take 10–12 tries before your youngster decides he likes a new food? That's okay—the key is to get him to keep trying it. Consider preparing a food several different ways until you hit upon one he will eat. With carrots, for instance, try serving them raw; slicing and microwaving them until they're softer but still have a crunch; or cutting them into chunks, drizzling with olive oil, and roasting at 400° until tender. *Idea:* Ask your child to look through cookbooks and find a recipe or picture of a carrot dish that looks good to him. Then, make it together.

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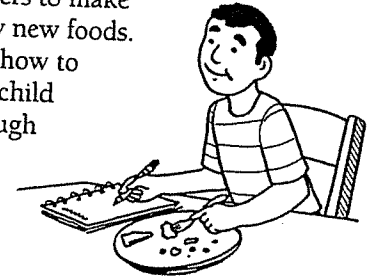


## What's that flavor?

Make tasting food into a fun family discussion with this suggestion.

Explain to your youngster that there are five tastes—bitter, sour, sweet, salty, and umami (a rich, savory taste typical in soy sauce and mushrooms, for example). Then, as you sample different foods, discuss which category—or categories—they fit into. For instance, you might say, “This lemon chicken tastes tart with hints of sweetness.” Encourage family members to make “tasting notes” as you try new foods.

Once he understands how to describe the tastes, your child might enjoy talking through the experience of trying foods. And that can lead him to sampling even more new foods!



## Dip it!

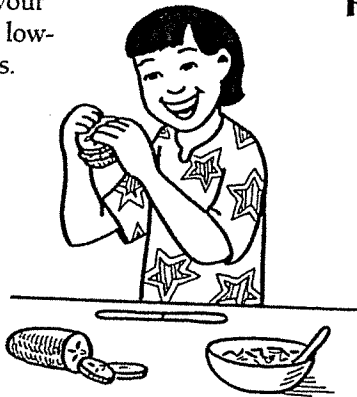
Kids have more fun eating when they get to dip their food. Try sneaking in a few foods your youngster doesn't normally eat by pairing them with a dip. You might give her zucchini spears, sliced radishes, or snap peas along with low-fat ranch or Italian salad dressing. Or consider this: A small dipping bowl of ketchup can make an egg-avoider into an egg-eater. *Idea:* Use small cookie cutters to make dippable shapes out of melon, cheese, or other foods.

## Go half and half

To help your child develop a taste for whole grains, think about ways to use them in foods that he already eats. You could make his favorite sandwich with one piece of white bread and another of whole wheat. Or put meatballs over a combination of whole-wheat and regular spaghetti (cooking times may vary). As your youngster gets used to whole grains, you can phase out the white products. *Idea:* Use whole-grain pita bread for a quick pizza snack or meal. Have your child top the pita with pizza sauce, toppings, and low-fat mozzarella cheese. Bake at 375° for 15 minutes.

## Have a tasting party

Use the power of positive peer pressure to your advantage! Let your child invite several friends over for a tasting party. She can select foods to sample, some that she already eats and others that are new to her. *Examples:* almonds, bean sprouts, firm tofu, olives, and mandarin oranges. Then, she could help you make up sample trays. You might use muffin tins and place a different food in each cup. Or put the foods in separate muffin liners, and give each youngster a plate with a few tastes. *Idea:* Ask the kids to vote on their top three choices.



## Stick to it

Let your child use craft sticks or lollipop sticks to create fun-to-eat kebabs with healthy foods. You could set out fruit like blackberries, grapes, and melon chunks. Or give him cooked chicken cubes, pieces of cheese, and grape tomatoes. *Idea:* Suggest that he make a fruit or vegetable sculpture with his kebabs. Cut a cantaloupe in half, and scoop out most of the inside. Turn the half upside down so he can stick the fruit kebabs into the melon rind. Or he might put vegetable kebabs into a baked potato.

## Reinvent sandwiches

Who says sandwiches have to be on bread? Use vegetables and fruits in its place. Put tuna fish salad (made with light mayonnaise) between cucumber slices. Try peanut butter between banana halves sliced lengthwise. Or have your youngster wrap turkey and cheese slices in a romaine lettuce leaf. *Idea:* Challenge her to come up with three new sandwich ideas using fruits and vegetables.

## Drink new foods

Instead of eating new fruits and vegetables, what about drinking them? Your child might realize he likes mangoes, passion fruit, or even spinach when they're blended and put in a cup. *Idea:* In a blender, puree 1 cup fresh baby spinach with 1 cup no sugar added applesauce, 3 cups berries, and 1½ cups orange juice for a tasty treat.

*Editor's Note:* Nutrition Nuggets™ is reviewed by a registered dietitian. Consult a physician before beginning any major change in diet or exercise.

# Nutrition Nuggets™

# Screen-Free & Active



Phones, tablets, TVs, computers, video games ... youngsters are easily drawn into anything with a screen. Try these suggestions for limiting screen time and encouraging active fun for the whole family.

## Less screen time

Experts recommend that children move more and sit less. Here are ways to help your youngster cut down on screen time.

**Journal.** Keep a notebook by the TV. Each time your child watches a program, have her write down the title, the time, and a one-sentence summary. She'll get writing practice, and you'll have a way to track how much—and what—she's watching.

**Activity scale.** Does your youngster spend more time in front of a screen, or more time being active? Help him make a scale to find out. He can use a permanent marker to label two sandwich bags: "Screen Time" and "Active Time." Clip the bags to opposite ends of a coat hanger, and hang it on a door-knob. For each 15 minutes he spends in front of a screen or being active, he drops a nickel in the appropriate bag. At the end of a week, have him see which bag weighs the most.

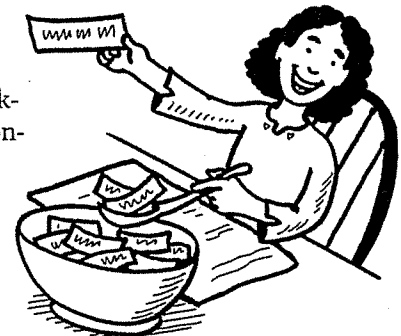


**Button jar.** Consider setting a screen-time limit (say, an hour a day). On Sunday nights, set out a jar with 14 buttons, an empty jar, and a timer. Each button is good for a half hour of TV, video game, or computer play time. Tell your child she can use 2 buttons per day. When she watches a show or plays a video or computer game, help her set the timer for 30

minutes. When it rings, she moves a button into the screen-time jar. This system lets your youngster know when her time is up and also tracks her daily screen time.

**Limited access.** Make screen time a little less convenient, and you may find your child naturally cuts back. For example, stash the remotes. Don't put a TV in his room—bedroom TVs are linked with a higher risk of obesity. And consider cutting down on the number of sets in your house. (*Idea:* Donate an extra TV to a homeless shelter or youth center.) If you have a laptop, keep it in one location. Open it when you use it, and close it when you finish so it's not constantly in use.

**Talk time.** Have meals at the table, not in front of the TV, and turn the set off while you're eating. Also, you might make it a rule that no one brings handheld games or cell phones to the table. Instead, build family bonds by using mealtime for discussions. Ask each person to tell the best or funniest thing that happened that day. Or put a "conversation salad bowl" on the table. On slips of paper, write conversation starters such as "If I could live at any time in history, it would be \_\_\_\_\_. Here's why," or "My favorite animal is \_\_\_\_\_ because \_\_\_\_\_." Take turns picking a slip, and get the conversation rolling!



*continued*

# More active time

Kids need at least 60 minutes of exercise a day. Use these ideas to boost active time.

**Family sports.** Does your child like to watch sports on TV or play sports-themed video games? Suggest these games instead:

- Set up a bowling alley in your basement or outside. Try to knock down 10 filled water bottles with a ball.
- Head to the driving range, or play a round of miniature golf.

You can also make your own indoor or backyard course. Help your youngster make “holes” by laying empty boxes and cans on their sides. Using a broom as a golf club, gently sweep a small ball toward the holes.



- Have a race. How many ways can your child think of to cross a yard or a room? Brainstorm ideas, such as hopping, skipping, walking backward, or jumping like a frog. Then, take turns picking one of those ways to race.

**Active volunteering.** Make your active time even more worthwhile by using it to help others. Contact your local United Way, Red Cross, or place of worship to find out what you can do. You might take wheelchair-bound seniors on walks, volunteer with Special Olympics, or participate in walk-a-thons to raise money for good causes. Also, find out how you can help



busy parents with babies or sick neighbors (walk dogs, do yard work).

**Stay-fit field trips.** It's harder to watch TV if you're not home, so get everyone out of the house for an active family day and leave your phones at home. You might pick peaches or berries at a nearby orchard or go rock climbing at an indoor center or a sporting goods store. Play Ping-Pong, air hockey, or foosball at a community center game room.

**New ways to exercise.** At the library, have each family member check out a how-to book about a different type of physical activity (martial arts, yoga, swing dancing). Together, learn a few basics of each one. When you find something everyone enjoys, consider signing up for a class at the YMCA or through your parks and recreation department.

**After-dinner walks.** The end of the day is a “danger zone” for too much screen time—it's tempting to relax in front of the TV or be on your phones from dinnertime until bedtime. Instead, leave the screens behind, and head out for a family walk. Vary the routine by mapping out different routes in your neighborhood. *Idea:* Take a “left-turn walk,” where you can only make left turns until you get back home.

**Home projects.** Keep everyone busy, and they won't even think about turning on a screen. You might clean out a closet and use it for balls and other sports equipment. Register at [freecycle.org](http://freecycle.org) for free items to add to your family's collection (badminton set, tennis rackets). *Other ideas:* wash and wax the car, paint a room, flip your mattresses, wash all the windows in your house.

## Five-minute fitness

Try these five alternatives to screen time that can be done faster than you can say “commercial break”:

1. Choose a poem from a volume of children's poetry and act it out.
2. Take turns calling out addition problems (2 + 3, 5 + 1). Everyone does a combination of exercises based on the equation (2 sit-ups + 3 push-ups; 5 toe touches + 1 lunge).

3. Put on upbeat music, push back the furniture, and dance.

4. Have a headstand or handstand contest. See who can stay up the longest.

5. Press down a line of packing tape on your basement floor or on the sidewalk, and pretend it's a balance beam. Play follow the leader: the first person does a move, and everyone else copies it (turn, kick, jump, leap).



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