

# Nutrition Nuggets

Food and Fitness for a Healthy Child

March 2010

Sponsored by the LA Department of Transportation

## BEST BITES



### Use a plate

Eating from a bag or box encourages overeating since it's hard to see the portion or realize how much you've had. Ask your child to put snacks into a bowl or on a plate. Ideally, she should use the serving size on the food label as a guide (7 pretzels,  $\frac{3}{4}$  cup cereal).

### Active quizzing

Combine homework and physical activity with these ideas. If your



youngster is studying for a spelling test, he can do it while walking up

and down stairs. Call out a word, and have him say a letter with each step. Or have him jump rope while naming state capitals.

### DID YOU KNOW?

Fresh, frozen, or canned vegetables are all good for your children—the important thing is for them to eat a variety of vegetables all week long. If you buy canned vegetables, try to find ones with no added salt. And choose frozen vegetables that don't have butter or cream sauce.

### Just for fun

**Q:** What has no beginning, no middle, and no end?

**A:** A bagel.



## Wholly delicious

Get your child used to eating whole grains while he's young, and you'll help him build a healthy habit for a lifetime. Whole grains will make him feel fuller so he doesn't eat too much, and they also decrease the risk of diabetes and other diseases. Try these suggestions:



- Begin by explaining why whole grains are good for him. You can tell him they're still "wearing their coats"—they contain the entire grain kernel with all its fiber, vitamins, and minerals. Processed grains like white bread have the outer layer removed, so they've lost important nutrients.
- On your next food shopping trip, put your youngster in charge of finding whole-grain versions of family favorites. Let him know he'll need to find the words "whole grain" or "whole wheat" on the front of a package or at the top of the ingredient list. See if he can locate whole-grain bread, pasta, rice, cereal, and pancake mixes.

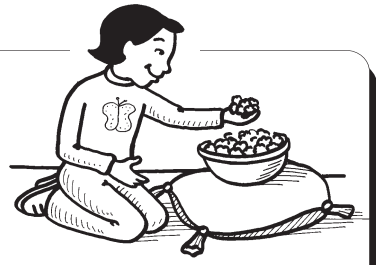
- Have your child look in the grocery store or through your pantry for whole grains. Then, play a rapid-fire game of "Name the Grain." Take turns saying a whole grain or a type of food that can be made from whole grains. *Examples:* oatmeal, spaghetti, rye bread, couscous, pretzels, tortillas, cornmeal, barley.

*Note:* Aim for 5–7 ounces of grains a day, with at least half of that in whole grains. One ounce = 1 slice of bread; 1 cup dry cereal;  $\frac{1}{2}$  cup rice or pasta. See [www.wholegrainscouncil.org](http://www.wholegrainscouncil.org) for more ideas. ♥

### Serve up whole grains

There are many easy ways to add whole grains to your youngster's diet. Here are three:

1. Crumble up whole-wheat bread (by hand or in a food processor), and add to ground beef or turkey when making meatloaf or burgers.
2. Make healthy popcorn. Put  $\frac{1}{3}$  cup popcorn kernels in a paper bag, turn the bag down to close it, and microwave as you would microwave popcorn (but without added fat or chemicals). Season with Parmesan cheese or cinnamon.
3. Buy whole-grain bread, rolls, and crackers, and use them for sandwiches and snacks. *Tip:* While making the switch, prepare sandwiches with one slice of whole-wheat bread and one slice of white bread. ♥

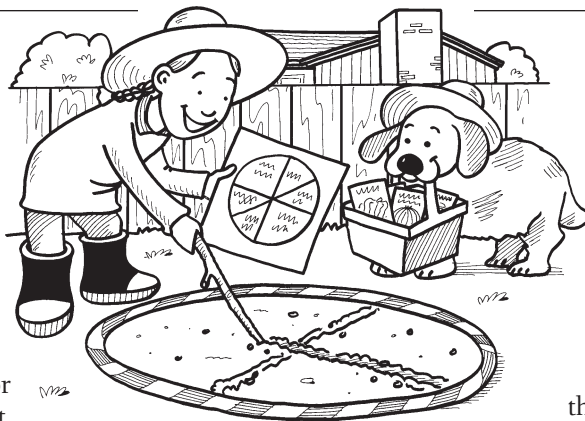


# Grow a pizza

Let your youngster learn where food comes from by planting a “pizza garden.” She can grow the ingredients and then use her harvest to help you make pizza. Follow these steps.

**Design.** On a sheet of paper, have your child draw a circle and divide it into pizza-shaped slices. In each wedge, she can write or draw the vegetable or herb she wants to plant (tomatoes, bell peppers, onions, oregano, basil).

**Plant.** Pick a sunny spot in your backyard, or sign up for a plot in a community garden. Then, your youngster can place



her plants or seeds in the ground according to her design. *Tip:* Have her lay down a hula hoop as her circle or use a stick to draw the “pizza.”

**Tend.** Let your child be responsible for watering and weeding the garden. She can pick the vegetables when they’re grown and pull leaves from the herb plants as needed.

**Eat.** Help her make a pizza sauce with her homegrown tomatoes and herbs. Buy or make a whole-wheat pizza crust, and spread on the sauce. Have her sprinkle on shredded skim mozzarella cheese, and top with the vegetables she grew. Bon appétit!

*Note:* For advice on the best time to plant in your area, contact your local cooperative extension office. ♥

## ACTIVITY CORNER

### In training

Charity runs are a good way for your family to get exercise and work together toward a goal.

Look in your community newspaper for announcements of upcoming events. Sign up as a family team, and then create a training schedule.

If you’re going to run a one-mile event, for example, you can map out a one-mile route in your neighborhood. Run a short distance the first day (say, one block and back), and add to that during each session. You might set targets, such as “Let’s run to the O’Briens’ house and then turn around.”



On race day, you’ll share in the good feeling of having accomplished something worthwhile. Then, keep the physical activity going by regularly walking or running your neighborhood route—and even signing up for another event. ♥

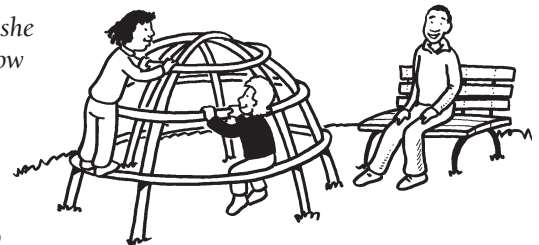


## Q & A My child won’t exercise

**Q:** When my daughter Amanda was little, she ran around and played all the time. But now she says she doesn’t like sports and she’d rather do other things. What can I do?

**A:** Let your child know that it’s important to get an hour of physical activity a day to keep her body healthy. Then, help her find activities she will enjoy and that she can do with friends or family, such as hopscotch, bike riding, or roller skating. Take her and a friend to a park where they can climb on the equipment and make up games.

You might have your daughter try a gymnastics class or a recreation center session of jazz, hip-hop, or ballet. It often takes kids awhile to find an activity they like, so don’t be discouraged if your child goes through a few before she sticks with one. ♥



## IN THE KITCHEN

### Going bananas

Bananas are the most popular fruit in America—and for good reason. They contain an almost perfect balance of nutrients and vitamins, and they’re economical.

Keep bananas on hand for healthy snacking anytime. And use a few for kid-friendly ideas like these.

**Blended.** Slice 2 bananas and freeze for 3 hours in a plastic bag along with 6 whole strawberries and ¼ cup blueberries (rinse and stem the berries first). Put the frozen fruits in a blender or food processor along

with 1 cup nonfat vanilla yogurt. Blend into a smoothie.

**Wrapped.** Spread peanut butter and jelly on a whole-wheat tortilla. Add a peeled, whole banana, and roll up the tortilla tightly around the banana.

**Baked.** Slice an unpeeled banana lengthwise, and place in a pie pan. Sprinkle with cinnamon and a little brown sugar, and bake at 350° for 20 minutes. Cool slightly, and eat the banana right out of the peel with a spoon. ♥



**OUR PURPOSE**

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

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