



Fuel Their Minds

Ideas for Better Eating and Active Play with Young Children



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A Child's Veggie and Fruit Consumption

Do you often struggle with a picky eater at home? Did you know role modeling, play, and multimedia are proven methods of promoting a healthy diet in young children? A recent study described in the journal *Nutrition & Dietetics* monitored fruit and vegetable consumption of kindergarteners before and after participating in the study. The study concluded the participating kindergarteners were more likely to eat fruit and vegetables if presented in a fun and interactive way such as taste-testings, cooking classes, cartoon icons that promote vegetable or fruit consumption such as Popeye (who enjoys spinach) and gardening.

Role Modeling

We know children are closely monitoring our actions. As adults we often say, "Eat your fruits and vegetables please," but we occasionally forget to follow through with our own suggestion. As a role model, we must always take advantage of each opportunity to set positive examples for our children. For instance, when children see you as the adult eating the same foods as them, they often feel special.



Being a positive role model sets a foundation for healthy behavior habits and, if continued throughout childhood, are later exhibited during adulthood.

Food Preparation & Cooking

Children are also more susceptible to trying new foods if they are involved in the food preparation process. Involving children in the preparation of meals not only helps them learn

the names and colors of foods, but also assists in the development of their hand-eye coordination.



Children learn cooking can be fun and also very educational, while focusing on components of language arts and mathematics. When preparing a meal, remind the child that a healthy diet consists of eating a variety of foods that are the colors of the rainbow. Begin by selecting an easy recipe for a healthy snack and then gradually building to a more advanced recipe for breakfast, lunch, or dinner.

Interactive Activity

Supplies Needed:

- ◆ Plain white paper or recycling paper
- ◆ Crayons or color pencils

Instructions:

1. Draw a rainbow, and for each food item prepared, write or draw the name of the food on the corresponding rainbow colored arc. **Example:** If preparing a banana, draw or write banana on the yellow arc.
2. Next, tally up each food item noted for each rainbow arc and write the number next to the arc.
3. Ask the child to tell you which colored food was prepared the most and the least.

Adapted from Medline Plus® Nutrition & Dietetics, Augusts 6, 2010

Encouraging Reading

Encouraging children to read poses a struggle for many adults. Although many children enjoy being read to, there are children who often delay in reading on their own. Children who spend at least 30 minutes each day reading for “fun” develop the skills and confidence to be proficient readers at school.



Begin creating a positive environment for your child by setting aside quiet family time for reading, and making special trips to the library and bookstore several times each month. Consider allowing your child to receive his or her own library card. Children who own library cards feel a sense of empowerment and are more likely to read the books by themselves, and are willing to return to the library more frequently.

Here are fun and interactive games you can do with your children to encourage or reinforce reading:

- ◆ **Create An ABC Book.** Compile several sheets of plain white or colored construction paper. For each paper, write one upper and lower case letter (A,a). Ask your child go through old newspapers or magazines and match each alphabet letter to a picture. Cut out and glue the pictured object onto the corresponding sheet of paper of the beginning letter. Next, ask your child to write the name of the object below the picture. After completing all 26 letters of the alphabet, compile and transform the pages into a memorable book.
- ◆ **The Alphabet Hunt.** Ask your child to list of all the letters in the alphabet on a piece of paper. Next, ask your child to identify household or classroom items that start with each letter. After identifying items, ask your child to write the name of each item below the corresponding letter. To extend this activity, ask your child to identify items for each alphabet letter next time you're at the grocery store.
- ◆ **Create Stories.** Make up stories with your child as you are reading out loud. As you are reading, alternate between yourself and your child and ask him/her to add their own ideas into the story.
- ◆ **Predicting The Outcome.** Before you begin to read, flip through the storybook with your child and ask him or her to predict the outcome of the story from what they see in each picture. Next, read the story to your child and discuss his/her predictions.
- ◆ **Repetition.** Ask your child to tell you the story after you have read it to him or her. This will reinforce his/her reading comprehension skills.
- ◆ **Cooking.** Choose a simple recipe and ask your child to help you make it. Ask your child to help you read the ingredient list and directions. Reading recipes not only reinforces their reading skills, but also math skills.
- ◆ **Shopping.** On your next outing to the grocery store, have your child “hunt” for you. Name a food with a short, phonetically easy word (like Life Cereal or Apple Juice) and give your child a few minutes to hunt up and down the aisle to find it. Practical uses for reading provide incentive for mastery, as children see the necessity and its everyday uses in life.



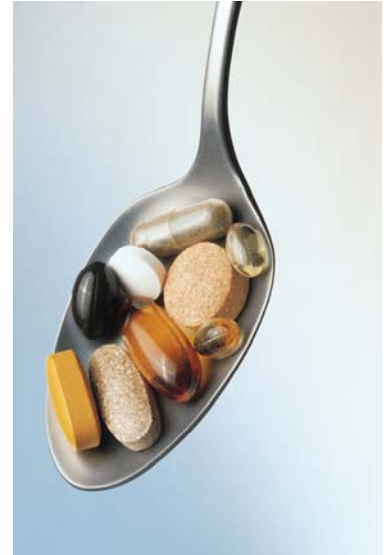
Multivitamins

Many experts find conflicting benefits of multivitamins and whether they are necessary to incorporate into our daily lives. Parents are often unsure if multivitamins are necessary for their young child.

Because so many young children are picky eaters, parents often worry about their children having nutritional deficiencies. Many of the foods we consume are fortified with vitamins and minerals that are essential for our diets. For instance, breakfast foods like cereals, pancakes, yogurt, milk, and orange juice are fortified with many important nutrients such as vitamin D, calcium, iron, and folate. Because of the size of children, they typically do not need a large amount of vitamins and minerals, and can easily attain the recommended daily value levels by consuming fortified foods.

Parents should keep in mind that large doses of vitamins and minerals can be toxic and may interact with certain medications the child may be taking. This means they can actually harm the health of the child. It is highly recommended to consult your child's physician if you have concerns whether your child is getting the recommended level of vitamins and minerals.

If a child is currently taking a multivitamin supplement, precautions should be taken. Always ensure the multivitamins are appropriate for the child's age group. Select a multivitamin which provides **no more than 100%** of the daily value for all vitamins and minerals.



Adapted from MayoClinic.com; August 2010; Multivitamins: Do young children need them?

A Sweet Treat To Gobble

Try this easy and interactive recipe with your child during the month of November. This is a healthy and delicious snack your child can create for their classroom thanksgiving feast.

Ingredients Needed:

For the Turkey's Body

- ◆ Bosc Pear
- ◆ Cheddar Cheese
- ◆ Peanut Butter or Cream Cheese
- ◆ Mini Chocolate Chips
- ◆ Cashew Nuts
- ◆ Dried Cranberries

For Turkey's Feathers

- ◆ Apples, any variety
- ◆ Oranges, any variety



Instructions:

1. Ask the children to wash their hands with warm soapy water.
2. Wash the fresh fruit in a clean strainer and set aside.
3. Using a serrated plastic knife, slice the apples into thick wedges as shown in the picture above and set aside. Peel the orange and arrange each fruit wedge onto a plate as shown above. Slice and core 1 half of a pear and place it in the center of the fruit wedges.
4. Slice 2 small cubes of cheese and cut out small triangles from each cube. Tuck the turkey's cheddar feet under the pear.
5. Next, use peanut butter or softened cream cheese to attach the chocolate chips to the turkey as eyes, cashew as a beak, and a cranberry snood.

Adapted from Disney's Family Fun Magazine©; Holiday & Seasonal Recipe

Activity Kits Free From the University of California

The University of California has prepared activity kits to help you teach nutrition and physical activity concepts to your young children, while integrating math, language and science. **These lessons come “ready-made”** with all of the materials you need to teach a fun and interactive lesson with your students. The curriculum was developed by the University of California or Scholastic, Inc.

We will bring the materials to your site, free of charge, and we can even provide your staff with trainings and additional resources to increase their confidence in these topics. We can also plan classroom, food-themed parties, special events, and other fun sessions.

If you are interested in signing up to receive these materials, please contact us.

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