



Fuel Their Minds

Ideas for Better Eating and Active Play with Young Children



70 Cottonwood St. Woodland, CA 95695
Phone: 530-666-8740

<http://ceyolo.ucdavis.edu>
Fax: 530-666-8736

Daylight Savings is Here



Now that the sun is out longer, we have more daylight to take walks, work in the garden, or clean up the play yard. All those tasks you couldn't do during the winter can now be accomplished.

Take advantage of this time of year. Plant a new vegetable or flower. Start a garden for your students. Allow the children to participate in more outdoor physical activities during school time. Do not let the sunlight be wasted this year; go outside and enjoy it!

The Essentials

Water is the best way to satisfy a thirsty child coming in from recess or break on a warm spring day. **Our bodies are made up of 60% to 70% water**, so drinking plenty of fluids every day will help keep our bodies healthy and hydrated.



When children become thirsty between meals and snacks, supply them with water instead of milk, juice, soda, or fruit drinks. This will help them save room in their stomachs for their next meal. A child can fill up quickly on extra liquid calories.

Adapted from "Edible Express" Volume VII, Issue I

Spring Time Favorites

Food in the classroom is memorable for children and can introduce new foods. When preparing food activities, remember to include a variety of colors; every color fruit or vegetable contains different essential nutrients that will help children to grow healthy and strong. Use fresh seasonal produce from your local farmers' or moveable market. Here are a few ideas:

- ◆ **Fruit and Veggie Characters**
Decorate a slice of bread, pita, or rice cake with peanut butter or low-fat cream cheese and top with fresh fruits and vegetables making a fun food character.
- ◆ **Tasting Party**
Work with your food service provider to have a fruit and vegetable tasting party. Provide 3 fruits and 3 vegetables that the children can taste-test. Unordinary fruits and vegetables work best for this activity.
- ◆ **Dirt Cups**
Give each child one small paper cup with non-fat chocolate pudding and a gummy worm inside it. Serve this with seasonal sliced fresh fruit. The child will have fun trying to find the worm in the "dirt". This is a great snack to serve after a gardening activity.

Children love to participate in hands-on activities and will be more willing to try something new if they are involved in the preparation and allowed to 'play.'

Article adapted from Montana Team Nutrition



Why Physical Activity?

Physical activity should be part of every child's daily routine. If children are physically active for at least 60 minutes a day this will enable them to learn at their highest level.

Physical activity will:

- ◆ Help children to concentrate and listen attentively during teaching time.
- ◆ Help children to memorize and retain information better.



- ◆ Help provide a hands-on way of learning, which helps children who learn best this way.
- ◆ Improve sleep at night, so children are less tired during the day.
- ◆ Increase immunity so children will be sick less often.
- ◆ Help establish a behavior that will carry through to their adolescent and adult years.

Asparagus Rafts

This is a great recipe for young children. It allows them to use a vegetable they may have never tried before and make a creation that is fun and delicious! Asparagus is in season and can be found at the local grocery store or nearest moveable market site (www.foodbankkyc.org).

Ingredients:

- 1/4 cup bread crumbs
- 2 Tablespoons grated Parmesan Cheese
- 1/2 teaspoon dried thyme
- 1/4 cup all-purpose flour
- 1 large egg, beaten with a fork
- 16 small to medium asparagus stalks, trimmed and cooked*
- Toothpicks
- 2 Tablespoons olive oil

Instructions:

1. Measure out the bread crumbs, cheese, and thyme into a large shallow bowl.
2. Put the flour on a clean plate.
3. Put the egg into a wide shallow bowl.
4. Line up 4 asparagus stalks side by side on a cutting board.
5. Have the children skewer 4 toothpicks into the set of 4 stalks about 1-inch apart to hold the asparagus together to form the raft.
6. Have the children dip each asparagus raft in flour, then egg, then bread crumbs, patting crumbs evenly, and then place on a paper plate.
7. In a large nonstick skillet, heat oil until just hot.
8. Have the children one at a time bring their asparagus raft to the cook.
9. Gently slide asparagus rafts into the pan and cook over medium heat until golden, about 3 minutes.
10. Turn rafts over and cook on the other side until golden, about 3 minutes more.
11. Slice each raft between the toothpicks. Hand the asparagus rafts back to the children on their paper plate.
12. The child can remove the toothpicks, let cool, then enjoy!



Recipe makes 16 small asparagus rafts

*How to cook asparagus: In a small microwavable bowl, put asparagus and water in the bottom of the bowl. Cook until just tender about 3-5 minutes.

Recipe from wondertime.go.time

How does your School Measure up?

Does your school promote nutrition and physical activity? Take this quiz to see how your classroom measures up.

- | | YES | NO |
|---|--------------------------|--------------------------|
| Do you: | | |
| 1. Make time to sit down at the table with the children during lunch or snack time?
◇ This helps to create a safe and positive eating experience for the children while modeling good behavior. This will also help improve language skills. | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 2. Provide snacks for the children?
◇ Young children can only go a few hours between meals. A morning and afternoon snack can provide the energy their brain needs to learn something new. | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 3. Model good eating and physical activity behaviors?
◇ Children look up to their teachers. They need to see them making healthy food choices and being active. Children learn best by watching those they respect and admire. | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 4. Allow children to try new foods on their own terms, not using force?
◇ Forcing a child to eat a food they are not ready or willing to try will discourage them from ever trying that food again. They may associate that food with a negative experience they had. | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 5. Introduce new foods more than once?
◇ Studies have shown that introducing new foods several times over a period of time will increase the likelihood of a child accepting and trying the new food. Don't give up on something if the children do not accept it the first time. | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 6. Reward children with hugs, stickers, or extra free time instead of 'junk' foods?
◇ Rewarding a child for eating their vegetables at meal time with sweets and candy will have a negative impact on the way a child may view a particular food. Providing lollipops for good behavior is not as effective as a hug and smile. | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 7. Serve children meals that contains at least one serving of fruits and vegetables and at least half of the grains being whole wheat?
◇ Serving children a nutritious meal will not only create a healthy child but will help them to perform better during class time. | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 8. Allow the children to engage in at least 30 minutes of physical activity every day?
◇ It is recommended that children engage in at least 60 minutes of physical activity every day. This time can be used to practice movement skills such as: jumping, throwing, balancing and stretching, or to create new ways to learn letters, numbers and more. | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 9. Limit sugar and sweets?
◇ Excessive sugar is known to cause tooth decay in young children. Limiting juices and excluding high sugar fruit drinks will help children to maintain healthy teeth and gums. | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |

Score:

Add up the total number of "yes" answers then look below to find if your classroom measured up.

☀ 7-9. Good job! You are creating healthy habits for the children in your classroom.

☀ 5-7. Okay. You are doing well but may want to implement one more healthy habit into your classroom agenda.

☀ 0-4. Make it a goal to choose and implement at least 3 healthy habits into your classroom agenda this quarter.



UCCE Yolo County FSNEP
70 Cottonwood Street
Woodland, CA 95695
530-666-8740



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Funded by USDA’s Food Stamp Program through the Network for a Healthy California and the University of CA Cooperative Extension, Yolo County Office. This institution is an equal opportunity employer. The Food Stamp program provides nutrition assistance to people with low income. It can help you buy nutritious food for a better diet. To find out more, call 530-666-8143

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 preschoolers or kindergarteners. 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.

CONTACTS



Christie Hedrick
Program
Coordinator
530-666-8740

Clhedrick@ucdavis.edu



Sonia Fernandez
Bilingual Program
Coordinator
530-666-8702

Ssfernandez@ucdavis.edu



Marcel Horowitz
Program Manager
530-666-8722



Diane Metz
County Director
530-666-8143

