



BEST BITES

Hot cocoa? Yes!

After an afternoon of sledding (or just being outside), nothing tastes better than hot chocolate. Forget the sweetened packets, and try this lighter version. Heat 1 cup fat-free milk, Stir in 2 tsp. unsweetened cocoa, 1 tsp. sugar, and $\frac{1}{4}$ tsp. vanilla, and whisk until the cocoa and sugar dissolve.

Draw a salad

Ask your child to name and draw one vegetable. Then, tell her you'd like her to draw a whole salad. Let her add any vegetables she wants and describe her salad to you. *Idea:* Get the ingredients the next time you're at the grocery store so she can make—and eat—her salad for real.

Winter swim

Wondering what to do this weekend? How about going for a swim! While that may not be the typical February



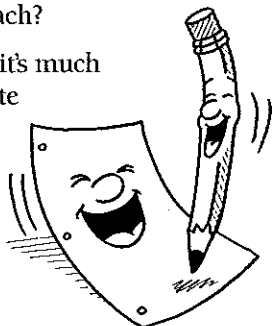
activity, kids love swimming indoors when it's cold outdoors. Check for

an indoor pool at a community center, YMCA, or nearby aquatic center. You might even be able to swim at a hotel pool for a small fee.

Just for fun

Q: Can you write a letter on an empty stomach?

A: Sure, but it's much easier to write on paper!



Parenting for better nutrition

To get your child to behave, you establish routines and set limits. It's the same with nutrition: If you put routines and limits into place, you'll be much more successful in getting your youngster to eat well. Here's how.

Create routines

If your child grazes all day, he'll eat more than if he eats at structured times. So schedule meal and snack times along with homework time and bedtime. Routines let your youngster know what to expect and when to expect it—and make him feel more secure.

Set limits

It's okay for you to say no to unhealthy foods. Does your child whine for candy at the grocery store? Tell him ahead of time you won't be buying it, and then pick the candy-free checkout line. Or if he begs for potato chips, try this approach: Squat down at his level, and calmly say, "We don't eat potato chips because they don't make our bodies strong. Let's pick out your favorite fruit instead." You'll let him



know you hear him, but that you are making this decision.

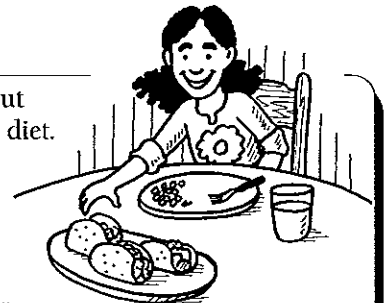
Use role models

When your youngster sees you getting yogurt rather than a muffin, he's more likely to follow suit. Then, as he gets older, what his friends do will become more important. Encourage your child to invite to dinner the friend who you know likes vegetables or drinks milk. Your youngster might not eat vegetables that night, but over time he'll get the idea that vegetables are okay! ♥

Something fishy

Eating fish 2–3 times a week is a great way to put lean protein and healthy nutrients in your family's diet. Try these strategies to turn your youngster into a fish lover:

- Cook filets rather than whole fish. Check to make sure there are no bones.
- Cut cooked fish into bite-size pieces and let your youngster drizzle honey mustard or low-fat ranch dressing on each piece.
- Mix canned salmon with light mayonnaise or plain Greek yogurt. Put into a lettuce leaf, and roll up into lettuce wraps. Or spread the mixture in a whole-grain pita.
- Swap fish for meat in familiar dishes. For instance, make fish tacos or tuna burgers.
- Serve grilled or broiled fish over pasta, and top with marinara sauce. ♥



My taste buds

How does your child know if her favorite food is watermelon, pizza, or scrambled eggs? By her sense of taste! Encourage her to explore her taste buds with these experiments.

Tongue tester. Put out foods from four categories: sweet (raisins), sour (lemon wedge), salty (pretzel), and bitter (unsweetened chocolate). Let her touch each



one to different spots on her tongue. What does she notice? (Taste buds can vary, so flavors may be stronger in different areas of her tongue.)

Flavor sampler. Get yogurt or pudding in different flavors. Have your youngster wear a blindfold and pinch her nose while you feed her tastes of each one. Can she identify the flavors? Have her try again without pinching her nose. She'll

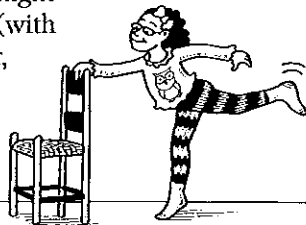
learn that smell helps her taste food—and now she'll know why food doesn't taste as good when she has a cold.

Idea: Let your child examine her tongue in a mirror. Explain that the little bumps all over it contain thousands of taste buds. 🍓

ACTIVITY CORNER Dance party

Let your youngster get her wiggles out—and build fitness—by dancing up a storm. Suggest these props.

Ballet barre. Have your child rest her hands on the back of a chair for an at-home barre and make up her own ballet routine. She might include plies (with heels together, bend knees and lower down) or arabesques (lift and extend one leg straight back, and stretch one arm forward and the other back).



Ribbons. Give your youngster scarves or ribbons to twirl behind her or around and around as she dances to music.

Books. Read a storybook or fairy tale aloud, and let her dance the plot. For *Cinderella*, she could pretend to sweep the floor, feed the birds, and dance with the prince at the ball.

Candles. Place unlit candles in random spots on the floor. Have your child do leaps over each one, reciting “Jack be nimble, Jack be quick” and other rhymes as she jumps. 🍓



PARENT TO PARENT Playing to improve

During soccer season last fall, our son Nick began complaining. “It’s not fun,” he said. “Our team always loses.”

I know Nick is competitive—he even sulks when he loses at board games—but I didn’t want this to stop him from playing sports. So I asked his PE teacher for ideas. She said competition can be a good thing because it will help Nick learn to handle losing and will drive him to work harder.

Ms. Walker suggested we talk over ways he could play better so he’ll feel good about his own performance. For instance, he might work on passing the ball to teammates or looking for open spots so he can receive a pass. Then, she said, we should help him focus on how he improves from game to game—and season to season. I’m sure Nick will always care about winning, but hopefully he’ll learn to enjoy the game no matter what. 🍓



IN THE KITCHEN February = pancakes

It’s National Pancake Month! Celebrate with pancakes for breakfast, lunch, or dinner. It’s as easy as 1-2-3 when you whip up this homemade pancake mix.

1. Whisk together 2 cups whole-wheat flour, 3 cups all-purpose flour, 1¼ cup powdered milk, ¼ cup sugar, 2 tbsp. baking powder, and 1 tbsp. salt. Store in an airtight container for up to 3 months.



2. When you’re ready to make pancakes, combine 1½ cups of the mix with 1 cup water, 2 tbsp. canola oil, and 1 egg. If desired, add a mashed banana or a handful of fresh or frozen blueberries. Drop by large spoonfuls onto a hot pan, flip when bubbles form, and cook until browned on both sides. Top with sliced fruit or berries, jam, or a little syrup.

3. Pancakes freeze beautifully. Put cooked pancakes in a freezer bag, and reheat in a toaster oven or microwave. 🍓

OUR PURPOSE

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

Resources for Educators,
a division of CCH Incorporated
128 N. Royal Avenue • Front Royal, VA 22630
540-636-4280 • rfeustomer@wolterskluwer.com
www.rfeonline.com

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ISSN 1935-4630