Arkansas Children’s Week
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Healthy Choices
for Better Beginnings

Marcy White
Diana Courson, Editor
Arkansas State University
Childhood Services
JoAnn Nalley, Director

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Division of Child Care and Early Childhood Education
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Arkansas Children’s Week 2010
Planning Committee

Dot Brown       Terri Helms       Morgan Nesselrodt
Diana Courson   Martha Hiett    Kathy Stegall
Jan Cox         Debbie Mays     Marcy White
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“...exercise was one of just four behaviors that could, all by itself, reduce the risk of chronic disease and premature death by roughly 50%! Combined, the healthy behaviors reduce the risk by 80%. They are: being active; eating fruits, vegetables and whole grains; not smoking; and controlling weight.”

Dr. David Katz
“Blessings on Exercise”
http://www.davidkatzmd.com/articles.aspx
Arkansas Children at a Crossroad...

Arkansas children are in the midst of a very real health crisis!

For the first time in history, a child born today will have a shorter life expectancy than the previous generation.

1 in 4 children eat fast food every day, and 60% have no regular form of exercise.

The number of children who are seriously obese has more than doubled since 1980. If current trends continue, 1 in 3 children born in 2000 will develop type 2 diabetes in their lifetime.

In fact, illnesses caused by poor diet and a sedentary lifestyle are on track to surpass smoking as the #1 cause of preventable death in America.

It is a frightening time to be a child, or a parent! But, there is hope...

While we might first pass health off as a “home issue” – solely the parent’s responsibility – Arkansas‘ early childhood educators are in a unique position to help right what is going wrong for our children!

Many children spend more waking time in a childcare environment than at home, and consume more meals there, as well. Healthy habits formed while in our care can last a lifetime.

Early childhood professionals also have daily contact with children and families, allowing us to serve as friendly and familiar experts in a way that physicians cannot.

There is hope for a bright and healthy future for Arkansas children, and it is time for us to lead the way!
Simple Steps for a Healthy Start

Fitness

• **Do it daily.**
  Children need lots of physical play, every single day!

• **Make it fun.**
  Play with children and help them feel successful. Children who learn to love playing hard are more likely to be fit for life.

• **Build a foundation.**
  Seemingly simple tasks like balancing, running, climbing, and jumping set the stage for more complex skills in years to come.

  Children who build solid foundation during the early years often continue to excel at and enjoy physical activity as they grow.

Nutrition

• **Make it a lifestyle.**
  Nutritious food habits can, and should, be a way of life! Help children and families experience practical, affordable, and appetizing health foods.

• **Watch for mixed messages.**
  The roles that we give to foods now can influence how children eat for the rest of their lives! Don’t let foods become rewards, “forbidden fruit”, or the center of a power struggle.

• **Consider it an adventure!**
  Help children take an active role in exploring new foods through growing, preparing, and serving healthy foods.

A healthy start is the first step towards a healthy future!
## Movement Skills in the First 8 Years of Life

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<td>Climb rungs &amp; steep inclines</td>
<td>yoga poses)</td>
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"I Am Learning" Summary

(Action Awareness)  "I am learning WHAT my body does."

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(Effort Awareness)  "I am learning HOW my body moves."

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(Space Awareness)  "I am learning WHERE my body moves."

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<td></td>
<td>Counterclockwise</td>
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</table>

(Body Awareness)  "I am learning about the RELATIONSHIPS my body creates."

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<td>Head, Neck, Ears, Eyes, Nose, Shoulder, Knee, Heel, Arms, Waist, Chest, Stomach, Hips, Leg, Bottom, Foot, Spine, Back, Elbow, Wrist, Hand, Fingers, Ankle, Toes</td>
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</table>

("I Am Learning Summary" Carson, 2002)
Bounce, Bop and Boogie in the Baby Room:  
Creating a Space for Infants to Move & Grow

**Did you know?** Active babies expend more energy, which decreases their potential for becoming overweight, increases their opportunities for skills development, and improves their health status (*Heinzer, 2005*).

Here are four simple ways to encourage active play in your infant areas.

**1. Magnificent Materials**

*Little Isabel strives to reach and kick the brightly colored toys suspended above her.*

*Seven-month-old Joshua chortles happily as he bangs two pot lids together.*

*Shanti, almost a year old, pulls up to a standing position at a low table and surveys her world from a new vantage point.*

As children explore the world around them, they spontaneously try stretching and moving in new ways. An environment rich in appealing materials can spark baby’s interest and encourage her to try new skills.

When creating a play area for infants, include plenty of appropriate materials to promote a wide range of skills. Essentials include:

- Toys for grasping, pushing, and pulling
- Safe balls of different sizes and textures
- Sturdy furnishings that allow baby to pull up safely.

Offer different kinds of materials to non-mobile infants throughout the day, and create an environment where older, more mobile infants can reach and use materials independently.

Provide enough clean, suitable toys to allow children plenty of options at all times, but avoid adding so many toys that the area becomes overly cluttered, with little room to move or play.
2. Room to Move

Eight-month-old Anthony spies his favorite green ball on the far side of the play area. Slowly but surely, he begins to scoot across the room to reach the much loved toy. At last, triumph! Anthony grins broadly as he reaches out to seize the ball.

In order to build and practice locomotor skills, infants need a safe and inviting space to creep, crawl, scoot, and explore. Ensure that even the smallest babies have a protected floor space to play; all infants benefit from room to stretch and move.

Limit or eliminate time that infants spend in cribs when not sleeping, as well as time spent in swings, stationary “activity center” seats, and other movement-limiting furnishings.

How much exercise does that “exersaucer” really provide? Consider removing some, or all, stationary play seats and swings from the room; you’ll be amazed by how much space for play becomes available to active babies when you do!

3. Movement Models

Mr. Marcus puts on a CD of lively music and encourages his mobile infant group to dance with him. Soon, the rug near the CD player is a blur of activity as Marcus and several babies bop, twirl, and stomp in time with the music!

When caregivers encourage and model active play throughout the day, they help infants discover the joys of moving and doing.

Take time to model movement and activity for your babies.

- Dance and march with babies indoors.
- Run and play outdoors.
- Chase and pop bubbles.
- Mimic baby’s clapping, toy shaking, and block banging.
- Try getting down on your tummy with the youngest infants, or try rolling, scooting and crawling with older babies!
4. One-on-One Time

After changing six-week-old Madison’s diaper, Ms. Emily leans down and speaks softly to her while gently stroking and massaging the baby’s arms and legs.

Later, she holds out a set of plastic keys to 3-month-old Alejandro. She rattles the keys to gain his attention and gives a little cheer when he grasps the toy.

As caregivers become attuned to each baby’s developing gross motor abilities, they can make the most of opportunities to help him or her build new skills during routines and play. One-on-one exchanges before and after diaper changes, movement games while nestled on a caregiver’s lap, and floor play times together are all occasions for motor development. There’s not a toy in the world that can take the place of face-to-face and skin-to-skin contact with a nurturing caregiver. Follow baby’s lead as she explores the world around her, supporting her discoveries and offering safe physical challenges. Playtime with you will stimulate and encourage the infant as she practices and masters skills such as lifting her head and chest; grasping, shaking, and throwing objects; pulling up; and taking first steps.

Pay close attention to baby’s actions and reactions. Your observations will offer insight into her every-changing development, and will allow you to provide meaningful, individualized experiences for her.

Reference
Gross-Motor Development
Widely Held Expectations

For 3-year-olds

- Walks without watching feet; walks backward; runs at an even pace; turns and stops well
- Climbs stairs with alternating feet, using hand rail for balance
  - Jumps off low steps or objects; does not judge well in jumping over objects
- Shows improved coordination; begins to move legs and arms to pump a swing or ride a tricycle, sometimes forgetting to watch the direction of these actions and crashing into objects
- Perceives height and speed of objects (like a thrown ball,) but may be overly bold or fearful, lacking a realistic sense of own ability
- Stands on one foot unsteadily; balances with difficulty on the low balance beam (four-inch width) and watches feet
- Plays actively (trying to keep up with older children) and then needs rest; fatigues suddenly and becomes cranky if overly tired

For 4-year-olds

- Walks heel-to-toe; skips unevenly; runs well
- Stands on one foot for five seconds or more; masters the low balance beam (four-inch width) but has difficulty on the two-inch-wide beam without watching feet
- Walks down steps, alternating feet; judges well in placing feet on climbing structures
- Develops sufficient timing to jump rope or play games requiring quick reactions
• Begins to coordinate movements to climb on a jungle gym or jump on a small trampoline

• Shows greater perceptual judgment and awareness of own limitations and/or the consequences of unsafe behaviors; still needs supervision crossing a street or protecting self in certain activities

• Exhibits increased endurance, with long periods of high energy (needing increased intakes of liquids and calories); sometimes becomes overexcited and less self-regulated in group activities

For 5-year-olds

• Walks backward quickly; skips and runs with agility and speed; can incorporate motor skills into a game

• Walks a two-inch balance beam well; jumps over objects

• Hops well; maintains an even gate in stepping

• Jumps down several steps; jumps rope

• Climbs well; coordinates movements for swimming or bike riding

• Shows uneven perceptual judgment; acts overly confident at times but accepts limit setting and follows rules

• Displays high energy levels; rarely shows fatigue; finds inactivity difficult and seeks active games and environments

Physical Fitness - Early Childhood Style!

During the first five years of life, children develop the movement skills, body control, and spatial awareness that are the foundation for physical development in years to come.

The National Association for Sport and Physical Education (NASPE) suggests that most young children should accumulate **at least 60 minutes of daily, structured physical activity**, along with **at least 60 minutes of daily, unstructured physical activity** (gross motor free play).

Does this mean, then, that all toddlers and preschoolers should be enrolled in structured team sports programs, or be taken to highly-controlled “Physical Education” classes to do calisthenics and run laps? Not at all!

Instead, early childhood educators can find ways to incorporate gross motor goals into the natural flow of the child care day, with an accumulation of an hour or more of guided (but not forced) movement activities. Carefully selected activities can break up sedentary portions of the day, help children release energy appropriately, engage the group during transition times, and add a sense of fun to the classroom.

On the next few pages, you will find:

- Tips for incorporating planned movement activities throughout the day.
- Songs, books, and games that encourage children to actively practice gross motor skills.
- Suggestions for making the most of gross motor free play times.
- A sample daily schedule that meets NASPE guidelines.
- An example of a teacher’s gross motor goal plan.
Active All Day Long:  
Incorporating Gross Motor Goals in the Toddler and Preschool Day

Active play is not just for the playground!

The creative child care provider can find ways to include movement activities during almost every portion of the day. Below, you’ll find tips to add action to center time, circle time, story time, and transition times.

**Indoor Free Play Time (Center Time)**

While child-selected, free choice activities during center time do not meet the NASPE criteria for structured movement opportunities, they offer valuable opportunities for children to engage in large motor activities while learning through play.

**Block Center**

Include large blocks for stacking. Homemade blocks can be made from cardboard boxes, such as cereal boxes and shoe boxes. These can be stuffed with crumpled newspaper and sealed with packing tape or contact paper to make them more durable. Large foam blocks and large, hollow wooden blocks are also available commercially.

**Dramatic Play Area**

Include grocery carts, doll strollers, and other wheeled toys to encourage pushing and pulling skills.

**Music Center**

Create a music center with drums, maracas, and other active musical instruments, as well as scarves and ribbons for movement and dancing. Don’t forget to include tapes of CDs of upbeat music to listen to!

**Movement Center**

Incorporate an indoor gross motor center into your classroom space. Even a relatively small space can be used, if materials are rotated in and out on a regular basis. Place the center near other active play areas, such as music, blocks, and dramatic play. Depending on the size of your space, two or more children can opt to play here during center time.
The area can contain activities that children can safely use during indoor free play time, such as:

- Balance board
- Sit & Spin toy
- Bean bag toss
- Velcro balls and target
- Rocking toy
- Mats or stationary steps for toddlers

**All around the room**

Younger toddlers love to dump and pour! Include containers filled with objects throughout the room and allow children to explore this skill.

Make large rice bags by filling travel-sized cloth pillow cases with dry rice; stitch closed. Children of all ages enjoy hefting and carrying these heavy bags and will incorporate them into all sorts of creative play.

**Whole Group Times (Story Time and Circle Time)**

Many programs find that they can make more time for developmentally appropriate small group and one-on-one learning activities by including very few whole group gatherings of this sort. Toddlers and younger preschoolers, especially, are most successful in smaller groups. For them, whole group gatherings should be brief and optional, if offered at all, and time spent in whole group gatherings should be limited for all children.

If whole group activities are a part of your day, consider ways to reduce “sit and listen” while increasing “get up and go” activities during these times.

**Story Time**

Look for books that promote active involvement.

The next two pages list ten favorite books that encourage children to join in the story with a wide range of actions. Not only are these books a cure for the “story time wiggles”, but they allow children to build literacy and listening skills while moving their bodies and having fun. They are also wonderfully fun to share with individual children during other portions of the day.

*True enjoyment comes from activity of the mind and exercise of the body; the two are united.*

-Alexander von Humboldt
Get Up & Go at Story Time!
Books that Inspire Active Involvement

5 Little Monkeys, by Eileen Cristelow
To turn a sit-and-listen story into a get-up-and-go story, consider reading it with small groups of children who can act out the roles of the jumping monkeys.

Caps for Sale, by Esphyr Slobodkina
What happens when the peddler awakes from his nap to discover that a tree full of monkeys has stolen his wares? This classic tale of a peddler and some mischievous monkeys makes a great “stand-up story-time” as children delightedly play the role of the monkeys, imitating the frustrated peddler’s stomping, fist-shaking, and hat throwing.

Clap Your Hands, by Lorinda Brian Cauley
“Clap your hands, stomp your feet, turn around, and take a seat!” – so begins a cheerful, rhyming story that will have children spinning, buzzing, hopping, and wiggling. The active nature of this story makes it best for small groups or spaces where children can spread out.

Copy Me, Copycub, by Richard Edwards
This sweet story follows a young bear cub and his mother as they prepare for winter hibernation. Little Copycub must learn the lessons of bear life (wading streams, climbing trees, and more) by mimicking his mother. Children will be eager to copy, too, making this the perfect story to accompany with creative movement activities.

Hand Rhymes, by Marc Brown
This volume contains 14 poems, each with accompanying hand motions. Children will enjoy rolling snowmen, rocking babies, bouncing like bunnies, and more. Clear illustrations of step-by-step hand movements make this an excellent resource for teachers and children alike.
Here are My Hands, by John Archambault and Bill Martin, Jr.

"Here are my hands for catching and throwing. Here are my feet for stopping and going. . . ." A simple, sing-song rhyme story introduces various parts of the body and the jobs that they do. Children can join in the fun by pantomiming the actions of this story.

¡Salta, Ranita, Salta!, By Robert Kaplan

This Spanish translation follows a frog who must escape a series of dangers, including a snake, a turtle, and a group of children who are trying to catch him. Each time, children can join in with the warning chorus of “¡Salta, ranita, salta!” (“Jump, frog, jump!”) while frog-hopping along with the action!

Movement Stories for Children Ages 3 – 6, by Helen Landalf and Pamela Gerke

This compilation includes 10 stories especially written to be told aloud, accompanied by creative movement. An introductory chapter also provides tips for introducing movement activities to young children and creating your own movement stories. Storytellers seeking to begin or expand a collection of kid-friendly tales will find this book to be a valuable resource.

The Gunniwolf, by Wilhelmina Harper and Barbara Upton

What happens when a little girl encounters the cunning Gunniwolf? This updated version of the story maintains the classic, repetitive story line, paired with non-frightening illustrations that make the story more appropriate – yet still exciting – for young audiences. As children chime in with the predictable text, encourage them to pat their knees to imitate the little girl running, and roll their arms to imitate the Gunniwolf chasing her!

The Little Old Lady Who Was Not Afraid of Anything, by Linda Williams

This not-so-spooky tale tells of mysterious clothing that follows a brave old lady home, eventually creating a charming scarecrow. Each clothing item is accompanied by a special movement – boots clomp, gloves clap, shirt shakes, and pants wiggle – inviting children to join in the fun.
Circle Time/Morning Meeting

- Begin your group gathering with an active welcome song. Here’s one example:

**We’re Glad We Came to School Today**
*(to the tune of “We Wish You A Merry Christmas”)*

We’re glad (child’s name) came to school today,
We’re glad (child’s name) came to school today,
We’re glad (child’s name) came to school today,
We’re glad he/she is here!

Let’s all do a little jumping,
Let’s all do a little jumping,
Let’s all do a little jumping,
We’re glad we are here!

(Repeat, using a new movement, such as stomping, twirling, and stretching, for each verse.)

- Find creative ways to incorporate movement activities into your meeting. Children might hop in place like bunnies while counting the number of days until Easter, chant and act out a thematic poem, or march with musical instruments.

- Include movement tapes or CDs during whole group gatherings. These help children build listening and direction following skills while moving and having fun.

Consider adding a few of the following to your classroom collection, or download favorite songs as MP3 files.

- *Dr. Jean and Friends* by Dr. Jean
- *Getting to Know Myself* by Hap Palmer
- *Kids Fun Box Set* by Various Artists
- *Kids in Motion* by Greg & Steve
- *Late Last Night* by Joe Scruggs

*It is exercise alone that supports the spirits, and keeps the mind in vigor.*  
- Cicero
Transition Times

Whether children are wrapping up clean-up time, waiting to wash hands, or traveling to and from the playground, transition times can be a source of classroom chaos, filled with frustration for caregivers and boredom for children.

By channeling the children’s energy into fun movement activities, two goals can be accomplished at once: transitions flow more smoothly, and children have yet another opportunity to expend energy and build gross motor skills.

Below you will find activity ideas for three common daily transitions.

1. Waiting-on-the Rug Activities

These activities are ideal for times when some children are finished with an activity but must wait on classmates before the next activity can begin. This sometimes occurs after clean up time and before or after meals.

**Do As I Say (the Tricky Mirror Game)**

Tell children that you have a game in which you will try to “trick” them. The game is played a bit like “Simon Says”.

Give children a directive, such as “Touch your toes”, and perform this action along with the children. Follow this with more directives, such as “stretch up to the sky”, “stand on one foot”, and “stomp your feet”. Each time, model the action as you give the directive.

After a few directives, try to “trick” children by giving one directive, but modeling another. For example, you might tell children to “bend down low”, while you stretch up tall.

Which of the children did what you said, and which did what you did? Children will find humor in trying to avoid your tricks, especially if you keep the tone of the game light and fun. The point of the game is not to have children sit out after making a mistake, but to continue having fun together.

Movement is a medicine for creating change in a person's physical, emotional, and mental states.

-Carol Welch
The Freeze Game

Put on a favorite CD and encourage children to dance around their area as the music plays. When you pause the music, they must quickly “FREEZE” like statues and not move until the music begins again.

After children have mastered the basic concept of the game, introduce new movement concepts to the “frozen” children. (“When the music starts, you’re hopping/crawling/skipping/sliding/scooting on your bottom…”)

To add a silly twist to the game, have children pretend to fall asleep each time the music stops. They can drop to the floor and pretend to snooze and snore until the music begins again.

Round & Round

Children stand up and move around their tables or around the rug area, as an adult chants:

Marching, marching, marching,
Marching round and round,

Marching, marching, marching,
Marching up and down.

March and march and march and march ...
And then sit down! (Say this last line very quickly!)

At this point, children must sit down as soon as possible. Repeat, using skills such as hopping, skipping, and stomping. The fun comes as children try to anticipate when the adult will say the last line, “and then sit down”.

Keep the game lively by sometimes saying this line almost immediately, and other times drawing out the previous line as children anticipate the next cue. (“Hop and hop and hop and ... hop and hop and hop...”)

Kids: They dance before they learn there is anything that isn't music. - William Stafford
2. Wait-in-Line Activities

These activities are ideal for times when a group of children must wait together in line, or in a contained area. For example, a small group of children may gather near the sink while waiting to wash hands for lunch.

Invisible Jump Ropes

It may sound silly, but young children have a keen sense of imagination and will enjoy this quirky and simple game.

Begin by passing out imaginary, “invisible jump ropes” to each child. Pretend to jump rope and encourage the children to join you. Try jumping very quickly and then in “slow motion”, jumping very high, jumping on alternating feet, and jumping side to side.

Slowly & Quickly

This easy activity helps children transition from a low level of activity to a higher level, and back again.

Model clapping very, very slowly, while chanting at the same pace, “Clap, clap, clap your hands as slowly as you can…”

Next, chant and clap very quickly, “Clap, clap, clap your hands as quickly as you can!” Repeat with other actions, such as stomping feet, waving arms, and flapping elbows.

Movement Songs and Rhymes

Share songs and chants with hand and body movements, such as “Head, Shoulders, Knees, and Toes”, “Do Your Ears Hang Low” and “The Wheels on the Bus”. To make the most of movement opportunities, model exaggerated movements so that children use their whole bodies, rather than just their hands.

For childcare providers wishing to learn dozens of favorite movement songs, the book, The Eentsy Weentsy Spider: Fingerplays and Action Rhymes, by Joanna Cole and Stephanie Calmonson is a great place to start.

Consider creating a system to allow children to select favorite songs during waiting times. A “Sing-along apron” is one popular choice. Create cards with pictures to represent actions songs and rhymes. A picture of an apple might stand for “Way Up High in the Apple Tree”, while a bus represents “Wheels on the Bus” and so on. Use Velcro dots to attach the laminated cards to the apron. During waiting times, an adult can wear the apron as children take turns selecting songs to sing.
3. Walk-Down-the-Hall Activities

Movement opportunities are missed and behavioral challenges are often created when we try to move children from place to place in a straight, silent line. Instead, why not take advantage of hallway transitions as a fantastic opportunity for creative, teacher-led locomotor play? Here are a few fun ways to move down the hall.

Zoo Parade

On each trip down the hall, try moving like different animals. Buzz like bees, waddle like penguins, hop like frogs, and strut like roosters. How else can you move?

**Down by the Station**

Begin by singing the classic children’s song, “*Down by the Station*”:

```
Down by the station, early in the morning,
See the little pufferbellies, all in a row.
See the station master turn the little handle
Puff, puff! Toot, toot! Off we go!
```

Encourage children to move down the hall like trains, scooting feet and pumping arms!

**Follow the Leader**

The teacher or a child can lead the group down the hall. Actions might include tiptoeing, taking giant steps, walking in a crouched position, marching, and winding side to side. Children can learn to play this game silently as they walk past rooms with sleeping infants, school-agers taking tests, or other quiet areas.
Making the Most of Outside Time

At least one hour of daily gross motor free play is recommended. With a little careful planning, the playground can be the perfect place for children to enjoy a wide range of motor skills! Below, you will find tips for offering optimal playground fitness experiences.

Equip Wisely

Commercially produced play equipment, homemade materials, and natural materials can all be used to equip an outdoor area that encourages active play. Begin by considering the ages and abilities of the children. Equipment should not be “too young” for children’s physical needs, nor should it be too difficult and overly frustrating for children.

Look for equipment that safely stimulates all three kinds of movement skills: locomotor skills, stability skills, and manipulative skills. When selecting equipment for the playground, assess the skills that each piece promotes. For example, balls encourage throwing, catching, rolling, and kicking skills, while tricycles allow children to practice pedaling and steering.

Portable equipment to consider:

- Balls
- Scoops, rackets, and other ball play accessories
- Hoops
- Scooters, tricycles, ride-on toys without pedals
- Wagons

Surprisingly, some of the largest pieces of commercial equipment, such as gigantic stationary play structures, often promote no more than two or three skills. If you are building a playground, you may consider whether the physical benefits and play value of such a structure merit the cost and the amount of space that it will require.

It may be possible to use the same amount of space for a number of smaller pieces of equipment that are not only more beneficial to children’s growth and development, but more fun, as well.
Get in the Zone
Outdoor free play should be free choice, but not necessarily a free for all!

Serious accidents can happen when tricycle riders are pelted with kickballs, toys are launched from the top of the climber, and jump ropes dangle from the slide. An overly-chaotic playground environment may cause some children to feel hesitant to participate in outdoor play.

By creating “zones” for different types of play, such as a track for wheeled toys and a broad, grassy area for ball play, caregivers help children explore and play safely.

Every Child, Every Day
Children have an innate “need to move”. When they do not have outlets for physical exertion, their excess energy often “overflows” at other times throughout the day. They may wiggle and squirm through story time, fall out of their chairs at lunch, and lie wide awake through nap. The lack of ample gross motor play time may result in behavioral challenges for the remainder of the day!

In addition, gross motor play time provides one of the best opportunities in the child’s day for exercise. A pattern of missed play times can result in:

- Loss of existing muscle tone
- Delays in development of movement skills and coordination
- More calories consumed than expended, resulting in weight gain

Ideally, some gross motor play time can be scheduled during the morning hours of the child care schedule, every day, year round. Every child should be encouraged and allowed to participate.

Avoid taking away a child’s outdoor playtime as a consequence for inappropriate behaviors at other times during the day. Often, it is the children who have the most challenging time meeting classroom expectations who need outside time the most!
Have a Back-up Plan

What happens when it rains, or when extremely hot or cold temperatures prohibit outside play? Ideally, children will have access to an indoor gross motor space, such as a gym. If this is not possible, consider creating a “rainy day tub” with gross motor materials for use in the classroom.

Pack a large, plastic storage container with materials such as:

- Hopscotch mat
- Balance boards
- Tossing games (such as beanbags or rolled socks with a small laundry basket target)
- Pair of jump ropes for a “leap the river” game
- Collapsible tunnel (or, drape a tablecloth over the long sides of a rectangular table to create a tunnel)
- Ribbons wands
- Hook and loop balls and mitts
- “Stepping stone” path made from rubber-backed mouse pads
- Bowling with small ball and empty plastic bottles
- Balls or shower puffs with scoops made from milk jugs or well-washed bleach bottles. (Cut the bottom off the jug at an angle, and cover the cut edge with tape. Hold handle to scoop and catch.)
- Rectangular pieces of wax paper to be used as “carpet skates”

When inclement weather occurs, teachers can use the materials in the tub to set up gross motor stations around the classroom, allowing the group to take part in free choice gross motor play regardless of the weather.
Be a Movement Model

Indoors or out, children learn healthy fitness habits from you. Rather than sitting or standing during gross motor play times, find ways to join in the fun.

Whether you take part in a game of tag or lead a group of children on an obstacle course around the classroom, your enthusiasm for physical play will be contagious! Children will naturally want to do what you are doing, and will discover that playing hard can be great fun.

Share New Skills

Consider offering an optional, structured game time at the beginning or end of gross motor free play time.

Look for simple games that suit children with differing motor abilities. A game like “Duck, Duck, Goose” is not ideal gross motor skill building because children spend significantly more time sitting and waiting than running. Likewise, games like “Musical Chairs”, fail to provide gross motor outlets to the children who are eliminated and must sit out for the remainder of the game.

Cooperative games where everyone can be involved at the same time, and no one has to sit out, are ideal.

Cooperative Gross Motor Games

Crazy Cones

**Materials:** Approximately 2 dozen plastic cones or 2-liter plastic bottles filled with several inches of sand.

**Objectives:** Children will run, changing speed and direction and dodging obstacles. Children will bend to manipulate objects at ground level.
**Game play:** Place the cones or bottles around a large, open playing area. Randomly place about half of the cones/bottles in an upright position, and the other half lying on the ground. When you give the signal, teachers compete against children, running through the play area trying to tip over all of the cones/bottles, while the children run around the area trying to stand them up again. The game ends when all of the cones or bottles are in the upright position or lying on the ground.

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**Sharing Squares**

**Materials:** carpet squares or small non-slip rugs, such as bath mats  

**Objectives:** Children will practice locomotor skills and will stop and start on cue. In addition, children will use spatial planning to fit into a contained space with peers.  

**Game Play:** Sharing Squares is played much like “Musical Chairs”, but children are not eliminated from the game. Children march around the playing area as music plays. When the music stops, children must hurry to find a place on a square, either alone, or with a friend. Begin the music again, removing one or two of the squares while children are marching.  

As play progresses, and fewer and fewer squares remain, children must work together to help everyone find a place on a square! You’ll want to end the game before there are too few squares for children to be successful.  

Once children understand the game, consider introducing additional locomotor skills, such as galloping, sliding, and skipping.

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**Man from Mars**

**Objectives:** Children will participate in a running and tagging game. Ideal for older preschoolers  

**Game Play:** Have children line up on a playground fence or gym wall. The teacher or one of the children becomes the “Man (or Woman) from Mars”. He/she stands in the middle of a large, open playing area and chants:

```
I’m the Man from Mars,
And I will chase you to the stars,
If you are wearing __________.
```
All children wearing the named color or clothing item then run across the play area to the opposite fence/wall without getting tagged by the Man from Mars. Any child who is caught joins the Man from Mars in the center and helps tag children for the remainder of the game. The last child to be tagged becomes the Man from Mars at the beginning of the next game.

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**Popping Popcorn**

**Materials:** a parachute, plenty of craft pompoms or cotton balls. Consider substituting rolled socks for young toddlers. If you don’t have a parachute, use a flat bed sheet!

**Objectives:** Children will use large arm movements and run to collect small objects from the ground.

**Game Play:** Spread the parachute and help children find positions holding the outside edges. Add pompoms, cotton balls, or socks to the center of the parachute. When you give the signal, children and teachers can work together to shake the parachute vigorously, “popping the popcorn”.

When all of the materials have popped off of the parachute, children can run to collect them before playing again.

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**Snowball Toss**

**Materials:** Lots of rolled, white socks! (Roll individual socks so that you will have more.) Laundry baskets or other targets are optional.

**Objectives:** Children will practice throwing, catching, and collecting skills.

**Game Play:** Introduce the rolled sock “snowballs” to children. Depending on the ages and abilities of your group, children can play with the snowballs in one of three ways:

- Children toss snowballs at targets only.
- Children only toss snowballs at teachers and teachers toss snowballs at children.
- Snowballs can be tossed at anyone.

If you feel that your children can handle an all-out snowball toss, set a ground rule that they toss at bodies only – not faces – and make a “no-toss zone” for children who do not wish to participate.
Introducing Movement Skills to Children

Ms. Stacy is the new teacher of the three-year-old classroom. Today, she has taken the group to the gym for gross motor play. She corrals the twelve children along the gym wall and announces, "It's time for a relay race! Go ahead and divide into four teams."

This directive gets little response from the children. Sarah Lynn tries to tell the teacher that she is three years old, *not* four; Samuel and Nate begin to kick the gym wall; and Mattie spins in circles with the hood of her sweatshirt over her eyes.

*Why won't these children listen to me?*, wonders Ms. Stacy. She pulls the children into groups, telling each, "stay here – don't move". When she finally manages to form the majority of the children into four crooked lines, Ms. Stacy gives the directions for the relay race. "When I give the signal," she tells the children, "I want the first member of each team to crab walk to the end of the gym and back. Then tag your partner and go to the end of the line."

Ms. Stacy blows her whistle to start the race, and chaos ensues! Half of the children race wildly across the gym, while several others remain frozen in place, not sure if the "stay here – don’t move" rule still applies. Meanwhile, Sarah Lynn pinches Samuel and Nate. When the boys begin to howl, she tells them, "Teacher said to tag you like a crab. Crabs PINCH!"

Exasperated, Ms. Stacy herds the children back to the wall and tells them, "I've had it! We'll just go back to the room and go to nap early."

The children in Ms. Stacy’s class are not being disobedient or naughty. They have no idea what is expected of them!

When attempting to teach children new gross motor skills, several strategies can be used.

**Keep whole group activities simple and engaging, especially for young children.** Teams, bases, relay lines, and other complex concepts are confusing to toddlers and young preschoolers. Simple games with very few rules are often the best! (Ms. Stacy’s three-year-olds would likely have preferred racing her back and forth between the gym walls to a complicated relay.)

Older preschoolers and kindergarteners may begin to grasp these concepts, but simple games are still best for large groups as they allow all children to experience a high rate of success, with little uncertainty and frustration.
Introduce more complex skills to individuals or small groups of children as they are ready.

Chances are, many of the children in Ms. Stacy’s class were not quite ready to learn to “crab walk”. The same scaffolding strategies used to introduce new fine motor, math, and language concepts in the classroom can be utilized when children are ready to attempt new gross motor skills. This is best accomplished with individuals or small groups of children.

Model and Cue

They say that “a picture is worth a thousand words”, and children pick up gross motor skills more quickly when they see you modeling them! Remember to take it slow, and describe what you are doing as you go. Complex skills can be broken down into smaller steps. For example, skipping can be demonstrated as a “step-hop-step-hop” pattern. Model good attitudes about effort, too... sometimes it takes a lot of practice before we can do something exactly the way that we want to!

Expect differences.

Every child develops at her own pace. As with all developmental milestones, there can be significant differences in the gross motor skills of children who are the same chronological age. It is not uncommon to find one five-year-old who is learning to ride a two-wheeled bicycle, while a classmate stills struggles to peddle a tricycle.

Positive messages about gross motor learning

- We can safely try new things without fear of ridicule or failure.
- Some skills take time and practice, and that’s OK.
- We can have fun as we learn new skills.
- We are all great at different things, but we can have fun playing together.
Fitting in Fitness
A sample preschool schedule that exceeds healthy activity guidelines

7:30 – Arrival, free play in centers
Includes movement center with a balance board, “jump the river” game, and frog-shaped beanbag toss.

8:15 – Clean up time, followed by breakfast at 8:30
Children sing movement songs, such as “5 Little Ducks, while waiting to wash hands.

8:50 – Outdoor free play
Children have a “duck parade” as they waddle down the hall to the playground. Outdoors, children have free choice access to a variety of gross motor equipment.

9:25 – Children are invited to join an active playground game
Teacher and children play “Follow the Leader” as they skip, balance, crawl through a tunnel, etc.

9:35 – Children go indoors, wash hands, and have free play in centers.
On the way inside, children pretend to be frogs, hopping down the hallway. Indoor movement center is available for free play.

11:05 – Clean up time, followed by a meeting on the rug
Children dance to a movement CD. Next, the teacher reads “Jump, Frog, Jump!” and encourages children to frog-hop in place as they join in the chorus of the story.

11:25 – Lunch time and transition to nap
Children play movement games, such as “Simon Says”, as they wait to wash hands before and after lunch.

12:05 – Nap time

1:45 – Snack time

2:00 - Outdoor free play
Children pretend to row boats to the playground. Once outdoors, children have free choice access to a wide range of equipment.

2:30 - Children are invited to join an active playground game
Teachers and children use a parachute to bounce a stuffed frog toy.

2:45 - Children go indoors, wash hands, and play in centers.
Includes movement center. A teacher calls attention to the “jump the river” game in this area and invites children to join her to play it.

4:30 - Clean up time, followed by a meeting on the rug
Children move to music while pretending to be different pond animals.

4:45 – Remaining children wash hands and have a light snack

5:00 – Free play in centers until end of preschool day at 5:30
How does this schedule stack up?

The National Association for Sport and Physical Education (NASPE) suggests young children need **at least 60 minutes of daily, structured physical activity.** *This schedule provides over one hour of cumulative, structured activity, through a combination of teacher-led playground games, rug activities, and transition activities.*

**At least 60 minutes of daily, unstructured physical activity** (gross motor free play) is also recommended. *The schedule provides one hour of outdoor gross motor free play, as well as a handful of gross motor choices during center time.*

More points to ponder

- Could you tell what topic the children in this classroom were studying? The teacher did an excellent job of pairing thematic learning with gross motor activities.

- How many different gross motor skills did children practice throughout the course of this sample day?

- Did the teacher introduce and encourage all three kinds of movement skills: locomotor, stability, and manipulative skills?

- Was the teacher actively or passively involved in children’s gross motor learning?

- Were the spotlighted skills and activities suited to the physical abilities, attention span, and interests of typical 3 to 5 year old children?

- How might this teacher document the children’s acquisition of gross motor skills and share this information with families?
## Room 101
### Pre-Kindergarten Gross Motor Plan

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Locomotor Skills</th>
<th>Stability Skills</th>
<th>Manipulative Skills</th>
</tr>
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</table>

- **Monday, music:** “Sammy” by Hap Palmer (movement CD)
- **Monday, playground:** “Follow the Leader” along railroad ties
- **Tuesday, small group:** Toss beanbags at construction paper shapes
- **Tuesday & Wed., center time:** 4” balance beam in rug area
- **Friday, gym:** Snowball toss with rolled socks!!!
- **Thursday, small group:** Walk on straight, zigzag tape line.

*Photos for portfolios*

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**How do you plan and document gross motor learning?**
Creating a Fitness-Friendly Afterschool Program

How have after-school activities changed in the past 20 years?

Studies show that kids in grades K – 12 are spending less time than ever before riding bikes, climbing trees, and playing with neighborhood friends. In many families, the days of playing outside after school are a thing of the past. Meanwhile, hours spent in front of television, computer, and video games are at an all-time high. It should come as no surprise that health problems associated with inactivity are on the rise.

How can afterschool programs help combat this trend?

• Consider beginning each day with the “Cha Cha Slide” or other fun dances, or an active group chant or cheer. Make movement activities a regular part of your group’s rituals and routines.

• Allow ample time for gross motor free play, indoors or outdoors, every day. Provide plenty of age-appropriate equipment such as flying discs, jump ropes, and a variety of balls. Join in active play with the kids, and remember that you are one of their most valuable role models of sportsmanship, fair play, and healthy physical activity.

• Offer indoor games that encourage movement, such as Twister, Toss Across, dance mats, Hyper Dash, and charades.

• If space permits, create a gross motor center in the group’s classroom/indoor play area. Possibilities include balance boards, hula hoops, jump ropes, a miniature basketball and hoop, and hook and loop catch games.

• Invite and encourage kids to join in special activities such as Limbo or cup stacking tournaments, or a dance-a-thon. Students who feel self-conscious about their abilities at traditional sports may enjoy participating in other physical activities, such as a neighborhood clean-up or an opportunity to teach a game to younger children.

Those who do not find time for exercise will have to find time for illness.

- Earl of Derby
• Look for cooperative games that allow everyone to play and have fun, without having to sit out or feel unsuccessful alongside older, more athletic kids. Encourage and model teamwork and tolerance. Consider one of the following resources for active, cooperative games:

  o *Cooperative Games and Sports* by Terry Orlick
  o *Everyone Wins!: Cooperative Games and Activities* by Josette Luvmour
  o *Team Challenges: 170+ Group Activities to Build Cooperation, Communication, and Creativity* by Kris Bordessa

• Include fitness awareness activities and challenges. For example, students might wear pedometers while walking and running during outdoor free play, later recording their collective steps on an ongoing graph.

*A mile worth of walking is equivalent to about 2,000 steps. If they work together throughout the year (or longer), can your group log the whopping 49,806,000 steps that it would take to walk around the world?*

(A group of 20 3rd and 4th graders accomplished this goal in 14 months!)

• With parent permission, schedule demonstrations or mini-clinics for a wide variety of sports and physical activities. Possibilities include martial arts, juggling, dog agility, ball sports, and clogging. Exposure to a wide range of activities can inspire kids to try something new.

• Consider creating interest-based clubs related to sports, exercise, and outdoor exploration. When children and teens develop a fitness-related hobby, they are more likely to be active later in life!

• If your program takes field trips, include active destinations such as hiking trails, skating rinks, and even rock climbing gyms.

Or, consider inviting the children and their families to join you on the weekend for a special event, such as a picnic in the park or family nature walk. This can be a great way to connect with families while encouraging healthy habits.

*Physical fitness is not only one of the most important keys to a healthy body; it is the basis of dynamic and creative intellectual activity.* -John F. Kennedy
A program that helps elementary students get up to 30 extra minutes of physical activity during the school day!

*ABC for Fitness™* is a simple, engaging no-cost physical activity program for elementary school students. The program uses brief "bursts" of physical activity spread over the course of the school day, enabling most children to accumulate 30 minutes or more of daily physical activity in the classroom. The goals of the program are to: (1) promote health and fitness; (2) enhance concentration and the behavioral environment in the classroom; and (3) help optimize academic performance.

*ABC for Fitness™* is designed to take the time that teachers typically spend getting restless students to settle down, or distracted students to concentrate – and convert this time into structured, productive bursts of physical activity. Since it fits into small intervals throughout the school day, it is intended to complement rather than replace time spent learning in the classroom. Ideally, the “activity bursts” will add up to at least 30 minutes of daily physical activity.

Each activity burst has three components: a warm-up, a core activity that increases breathing and heart rate, and a cool-down. Teachers can select different options for each warm-up, core activity, and cool-down. In addition, they can choose from a menu of options to apply the activity bursts to meet their classroom needs:

- **Basic activity bursts** to provide a break between classes, meet students’ need to move periodically, and help them to channel their energy so they can refocus on learning.
- **Advanced activity bursts** that combine sets of movements into engaging classroom activities.
- **Activity bursts of imagination** that use creativity to move in the classroom.
- **Activity bursts for learning and fitness** that facilitate hands-on learning in language arts, social studies, music, math, science, and health classes.

For more information about ABC, contact AR21C: Vicky Shelby (vshelby@paragould.k12.ar.us) or Deb Swink (swinkd@clinton.k12.ar.us).

*ABC* was developed by David L. Katz, MD, MPH, FACPM, FACP, Director of the Yale-Griffin Prevention Research Center, with contributions from Marvin Christley, Physical Education Teacher in the New Haven Public Schools, and Jean Mee, EdD, Physical Education & School Health Consultant from the Connecticut Department of Education.
Grains
Make half your grains whole
Start smart with breakfast. Look for whole-grain cereals.
Just because bread is brown doesn’t mean it’s whole-grain. Search the ingredients list to make sure the first word is “whole” (like “whole wheat”).

Vegetables
Vary your veggies
Color your plate with all kinds of great-tasting veggies.
What’s green and orange and tastes good? Veggies! Go dark green with broccoli and spinach, or try orange ones like carrots and sweet potatoes.

Fruits
Focus on fruits
Fruits are nature’s treats – sweet and delicious. Go easy on juice and make sure it’s 100%.

Milk
Get your calcium-rich foods
Move to the milk group to get your calcium. Calcium builds strong bones.
Look at the carton or container to make sure your milk, yogurt, or cheese is lowfat or fat-free.

Meat & Beans
Go lean with protein
Eat lean or lowfat meat, chicken, turkey, and fish. Ask for it baked, broiled, or grilled – not fried. It’s nutty, but true. Nuts, seeds, peas, and beans are all great sources of protein, too.

For an 1,800-calorie diet, you need the amounts below from each food group. To find the amounts that are right for you, go to MyPyramid.gov.

- Grains: Eat 6 oz. every day; at least half should be whole
- Vegetables: Eat 2 ½ cups every day
- Fruits: Eat 1 ½ cups every day
- Milk: Get 3 cups every day:
  - for kids ages 2 to 5, it’s 2 cups
- Meat & Beans: Eat 5 oz. every day

Oils
Oils are not a food group, but you need some for good health. Get your oils from fish, nuts, and liquid oils such as corn oil, soybean oil, and canola oil.

Fats and sugars — know your limits
- Get your fat facts and sugar smarts from the Nutrition Facts label.
- Limit solid fats as well as foods that contain them.
- Choose food and beverages low in added sugars and other calorie sweeteners.

Find your balance between food and fun
- Move more: Aim for at least 60 minutes everyday, or most days.
- Walk, dance, bike, rollerblade – it all counts. How great is that!
Nutrition from the Start

Checklist for Healthy Mealtimes with Infants and Toddlers

Nutritional Knowledge

- Caregivers are familiar with nutritional needs of infants and toddlers. Older infants and toddlers are served well-balanced meals.
- New foods are introduced on an individual basis, as baby gives cues that she is ready.
- For babies just starting out on solid foods, single-ingredient foods are introduced first, with about week between introductions to check for food reactions.
- DHA-additive baby foods and foods with large amounts of added sweeteners (sugar, corn syrup) and are avoided. Frequent feeding of sugar-laden foods could promote an early preference for foods with sweeteners, making it harder to convince baby to eat healthier foods, as well.

Did you know? Until age 2, about half of baby’s calories should come from fat, such as the natural fats found in breast milk or (after age 1) whole cow’s milk.

Bottles and Cups

- Bottles are stored and/or mixed properly.
- Bottles are warmed to the correct temperature in a safe manner. Hot/warm tap water is not added to bottles, and a microwave is not used for warming.
- Small babies are held as they are bottle fed. Bottles are never propped.
  - Children of any age are not placed in cribs or on cots with bottles or sippy cups.
  - Bottles and cups are clearly labeled with children’s names.
  - Bottles and cups “sit out” for brief periods of time only, as children are using them. Bottles and cups are refrigerated or emptied, washed, and sanitized between uses.

Did you know? 100% fruit juices can usually be introduced around 9 months, but provide far less nutrition than the original fruit. If juice is given, limit to about 4 ounces a day, served from a cup.
**Mealtime Mind-set**

- Mealtimes are relaxed and pleasant, not rushed.
- A predictable schedule of meals and snacks is followed, and providers work together to make meals as stress-free as possible. For example, hungry children are not left waiting in high chairs as caregivers prepare food.
- Children receive individual attention at mealtimes. Ideally, children who require adult assistance with eating receive one-on-one attention.
- Power struggles are avoided. Children’s cues about hunger and satiety are acknowledged. Providers don’t force “one more bite”.
- Caregivers do not display strong dislikes towards certain foods. Caregivers model consumption and enjoyment of healthy foods.
- Infants are allowed to touch and explore foods. Utensils and cups are introduced as baby is ready, with a focus on celebrating self-help skills, rather than on avoiding mess. Gooey faces and sticky fingers are a part of the learning experience.
- Deserts, candy, or other treats are not given as rewards.
- Children are given numerous opportunities to try new foods. Toddlers’ “familiar favorites” are served alongside new food experiences.

**Did you know?** Many children need to be exposed to a new food 10 to 15 times – or more - before it is readily accepted!

**Partnership with Parents**

- Provider works with families to introduce new, healthy foods as baby grows.
- Written information about daily baby’s eating and drinking habits are provided to parents. There is also a system in place to allow parents to share information about feedings that occurred at home.
- Providers serve as “helpful experts” to help new parents understand safe and healthy feeding practices.
- Family culture is valued. Providers strive to make feeding experiences in the childcare environment familiar and comfortable to baby.
- Providers share nutrition resource information with families, as well as information about assistance programs for families who may be struggling to afford baby formula or nutritious food.
Behavioral Milestones

The preschool years are an important time for developing healthy habits for life. From the ages of 2 to 5, children grow and develop in ways that affect behavior in all areas, including eating. The timing of these milestones may vary with each child.

2 Years
- Can use a spoon and drink from a cup
- Can be easily distracted
- Growth slows and appetite drops
- Develops likes and dislikes
- Can be very messy
- May suddenly refuse certain foods

3 Years
- Makes simple either/or food choices, such as a choice of apple or orange slices
- Pours liquid with some spills
- Comfortable using fork and spoon
- Can follow simple requests such as "Please use your napkin."
- Starts to request favorite foods
- Likes to imitate cooking
- May suddenly refuse certain foods

4 Years
- Influenced by TV, media, and peers
- May dislike many mixed dishes
- Rarely spills with spoon or cup
- Knows what table manners are expected
- Can be easily sidetracked
- May suddenly refuse certain foods

5 Years
- Has fewer demands
- Will usually accept the food that’s available
- Dresses and eats with minor supervision
Top 10 Ways to Raise Nutrition-Savvy Children

Attitudes about food and eating can begin in infancy, and children who enjoy nutritious diets as young children are more likely to maintain good eating habits for life! Here are some proven habits of healthy families.

1. Model healthy habits.

   Children often learn more from what adults do than from what adults say. Let your child see you enjoying healthy food choices such as fruits, vegetables, and whole grains. Healthy habits begin at the grocery store! If you want to limit the amount of junk food and processed foods that young children consume, simply don’t bring much of it home from the store. Instead, stock your pantry with ingredients for more nutritious meals and snacks, and allow your child to choose from the foods on-hand.

2. Plan ahead.

   Busy families often find themselves grabbing food on the go, whether it is a snack from the grocery store deli, chips and soda at the gas station, or a sack full of dinner from a fast food restaurant’s drive through. While quick and convenient, these food choices pack a lot of sugar, salt, fat, and calories, and offer little of the nutrition that a growing child needs. When possible, allow time to eat a healthy meal or snack at home.

   When snacks on the go are needed, take along your own, healthier options, such as baggies of low-sugar cereal, fruit leather, whole grain granola bars or mini-muffins, or fresh fruit.

3. Stay on schedule.

   Young children need to eat every few hours, so plan for 3 meals and 2-3 snacks daily. Establish and maintain regular mealtimes for your family. While schedules do not need to be strictly enforced, avoid delaying meals to the point that children get overly hungry. If a child becomes hungry again before a scheduled meal or snack, offer an additional small, healthy snack, but avoid candy and junk food.
4. Make mealtimes meaningful.

Hang up the phone and turn off the TV. Make meals a time for talking to one another and enjoying a nutritious meal together. Avoid power struggles with picky eaters, but insist that the family members remain at the table together for a reasonable amount of time. If your child is hungry, she will eat during this time.

5. Limit screen time.

Television viewing not only decreases children’s activity levels, but also exposes them to dozens of commercials for sugary, fatty, junk foods. A study released in 2007 by the Institute of Medicine found that children were exposed to 21 advertisements for unhealthy foods while watching a two-hour block of Saturday morning cartoons. It’s no wonder that your child becomes convinced that she can’t live without the latest cartoon character cereal or fast food kids’ meal!

When possible, offer more active alternatives to television viewing. If television is used, consider viewing advertisement-free Public Broadcasting Stations (PBS) or watching DVDs of your child’s favorite programs.

6. Check your attitudes about food.

There is a good chance that your attitudes about food as an adult were shaped by your food experiences as a child. Here are some examples of the messages that we send to children about food:

- **Gunter is disappointed that his team lost another ball game.** Aunt Greta suggests that a stop at his favorite burger shop might cheer him up. When food is used as a “pick-me-up” for a child who is hurt or has a bad day, the child learns to eat to feel better. This often leads to emotional overeating later in life.

- **Ava’s father insists that she clean her plate before she can have dessert.** A “clean your plate” policy forces the child to ignore her body’s cues that she is full. In time, she may lose her ability to naturally judge when to stop eating. Offering dessert as the prize at the end of the meal may lead the child to value sweet treats above all other foods.

- **Marcus and Jaylen’s mother pays close attention to the eating habits of her 10-year-old twins.** She forbids them to have candy and requires
that they say “no thank you” when offered cake at birthday parties. Unless children have special dietary needs, it may be unwise to make any food off limits 100% of the time. If children feel deprived of foods that they see friends enjoying, they may overindulge in those foods when the authority figure is not there to stop them! It may be more beneficial teach children to understand why some foods should be “once in awhile” choices, while healthier foods are better for every day.

The Perez family enjoys a pepperoni pizza from their favorite pizzeria. All except mom, that is – she skips the pizza and sits sullenly picking at a green salad because she is on a diet. Opting for the salad over the pizza was a healthy choice, but mom’s unhappy demeanor may be sending the wrong message to her children. Instead of modeling unpleasant crash diets, teach children about the habits needed for an ongoing healthy eating lifestyle, such as portion control and a well-balanced diet.

7. For little eaters, serve meals in bits and pieces.

Young children have different food preferences than adults, and may be more sensitive to food textures and seasonings. Rather than fixing completely different meals for the youngest members of your family, consider breaking foods down to the basic ingredients. For example, a toddler may prefer shredded chicken, plain pasta, and vegetables “on the side” to a complex pasta, chicken, and vegetable casserole. Some young children also very much prefer that different foods not touch one another on the plate!

8. Know your portion sizes.

Children and adults alike often eat larger-than-recommended portion sizes of foods like meats, breads, and starchy vegetables, such as potatoes. Even for adults, the suggested portion size of a serving of meat is 3 ounces; a piece of steak or chicken of this size is about the size of a deck of cards!

When your teen eats three big ground beef “sloppy joes”, he has consumed approximately six servings each of meat and bread! Unless he burns a lot of calories each day, this is most likely much more food than he needs, even as a growing teen. Plus, even if he does not struggle with his weight now, he is
forming eating habits that will stay with him as he gets older and his metabolism slows.

There’s no reason for anyone to leave the table hungry, but parents can help control what children fill up on. Consider serving only the recommended portion sizes of meat, pasta, starches, and dairy products, with plenty of extra fruits, vegetables, and whole grain breads available as “seconds” for anyone who is still hungry.

Find specific information on portion sizes at [www.mypyramid.gov](http://www.mypyramid.gov)

9. **Try new foods together.**
   
   Does your toddler prefer red, yellow, or green apples? What does your preschooler think a mango or papaya might taste like?

   Has your child ever explored a fresh pineapple, or might your teen enjoy his own "Iron Chef" adventure, recreating a favorite Asian dish at home?

   Make an adventure out of trying new, healthy foods! Consider a trip to the farmer’s market or supermarket produce isle to select new foods to taste test. Encourage children to try both raw and cooked vegetables, and to use descriptive words for the tastes and textures that they experience.

10. **Involve children in growing, cooking, and serving healthy foods!**
    
    When children help to grow and/or prepare healthy foods, they are much more likely to enjoy eating them. Consider starting a family garden. Even a small window box or container garden can help children develop an interest in fruits and vegetables. Carrots, strawberries, and cucumbers are especially easy to grow.

    In the kitchen, toddlers can help with simple mixing tasks. Preschoolers will enjoy beating eggs, slicing soft fruits and vegetables, and tossing salads. Time spent with children in the kitchen can be wonderful “together time”, and, as your kids grow, so, too will their ability to help with cooking tasks.
Recommended Reading

Recipes for Healthy Families

*Big Book of Healthy Family Dinners (Better Homes & Gardens)* by Kristi Fuller

*Real Food for Healthy Kids: 200+ Easy, Wholesome Recipes* by Tanya Wenman Steel

*The Six O’Clock Scramble: Quick, Healthy, and Delicious Dinner Recipes for Busy Families* by Aviva Goldfarb

*Toddler Café: Fast, Healthy, and Fun Ways to Feed Even the Pickiest Eater* by Jennifer Carden

Cooking with Young Children

*Pretend Soup and Other Real Recipes: A Cookbook for Preschoolers and Up* by Mollie Katzen

*The Little Book of Cooking Together: Simple Recipes for Young Children* by Lorraine Frankish

*The Toddler Cookbook and The Mom & Me Cookbook* by Annabel Karmel

Gardening

*Gardening with Children (Brooklyn Botanic Garden All-Region Guide)* by Monika Hanneman

*Grow Your Own Pizza: Gardening Plans and Recipes for Kids* by Constance Hardesty

*Roots, Shoots, Buckets & Boots: Gardening Together with Children* by Sharon Lovejoy

General Nutrition

*365 Activities for Fitness, Food, and Fun for the Whole Family* by Julia Sweet

*How to Teach Nutrition to Kids* by Connie Liakos Evers

*The Everything Family Nutrition Book: All you need to keep your family healthy, active, and strong* by Leslie Bilberback
Creating a Raised Garden

Raised garden beds offer a perfect first gardening experience for children.

Advantages include:

- Small “footprint”. Raised gardens can be built to any size that suits your needs!
- Well-defined area. Raised beds help children understand garden boundaries.
- Easier maintenance. Less bending and weeding than a traditional garden, as well as fewer problems with moles and other pests.

Raised garden beds can be purchased commercially, or you can build your own using the directions below.

![Raised Garden Bed](image)

**Materials:**

**Lumber**
Avoid using wood treated with creosote or other dangerous chemicals. Cedar and redwood are excellent choices.

You’ll need:
- One 6-foot-long 4-by-4
- Six 8-foot-long 2-by-6

**Fastenings**
- 32 3½-inch #14 wood screws
- 16 ½-inch #8 wood screws

**Other (optional)**
- Exterior wood stain
- Chicken wire or hardware cloth

**Tools**
- Handsaw, table saw, or power saw
- Drill with screwdriver bit
- Rake or hoe
- Trowel

**Soil**
- 32 cubic feet (1 1/5 cu. yd.) planting mix
**Building the Bed**

1. Cut the 4-by-4 board into four 16-inch-tall corner posts.
2. Cut two of the 2-by-6 boards in half.
3. If using stain, stain lumber; let dry overnight.
4. Place the pieces on a hard, flat surface. You’ll assemble the bed upside down:
   - Set a 4-foot 2-by-6 on its thin edge on pavement, and place a 16-inch post at one end.
   - Secure post with two 3½-inch screws. Repeat at other end of board.
   - Repeat with other short board.
   - Join short sides with an 8-foot board; and secure with two screws.
   - Add other long side.
   - Add second layer of 2-by-6s.

**Position the Bed**

1. With help from a partner, flip the bed right side up.
2. Move it into position in the yard, marking with a trowel each corner post’s location.
3. Move the bed aside; dig a 5- to 6-inch-deep hole for each post.
4. Put the bed back into place, with posts in holes; fill around posts with soil.

**Line the Bed (optional)**

Rake the ground inside the bed. If using chicken wire or hardware cloth to deter burrowing pests, cut to size and place inside the bed.

**Fill the Bed**

Fill the bed with planting mix; rake it smooth, and moisten it with a gentle spray from the hose.
**Planting the Garden**

Consider one of the following, or another of your children’s favorites:

- **Sunflowers** – Make a soil hill containing up to 6 confectionary sunflower seeds in a sunny end of your bed. Sunflowers will sprout about a 1 week and should be 2' tall in about a month. In 8 weeks, the buds will flower, revealing hundreds of seed kernels.

- **Lettuce** – Perfect for partial shade. Space head lettuce 8” apart or leaf lettuce 4” apart. Keep soil moist, especially during the first two weeks. The seeds will germinate in 7-10 days. Leaf lettuce will be ready to eat in about 30 days, while head lettuce will be ready in about 40 days. What a great way to convince kids to eat their salad!

- **Snow Peas** – Prefer partial shade. Plant about 1” apart; seeds will germinate in about 10 days, and you’ll have peas to eat in a couple of months. Try some fresh off the vine.

- **Pumpkins** – Love a very sunny spot. Make a dirt hill and add several pumpkin seeds. You’ll see growth in a couple of weeks, flowers after about 10 weeks, and then, at last, pumpkins!

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**Curriculum Connections**

- Record how long it takes for your seeds to sprout.
- Make predictions about how long it will take fruits and veggies to grow.
- Measure and compare the height of different kinds of plants.
- Take photos of plants as they grow; use for sequencing activities.
- Keep a journal of your garden experiences.
- Tell a story from a worm’s point of view.
- Taste your harvest and make a graph of favorites.
- Cook your veggies using pictorial recipes.
- Make a seed collection.
What the families say about the Early Sprouts Program

Karen Gutierrez, Early Childhood Teacher, Child Development Center
Carol Russell, Early Childhood Teacher, Child Development Center
Dottie Bauer, Ed.D., Professor, Education
Lynn Arnold, RD, Early Sprouts Program Coordinator
Karrie Kalich, Ph.D., Associate Professor, Health Science
Keene State Faculty and Staff
University of New Hampshire Child Study & Development Center
Lily Garden Learning Center
Head Start Centers in Keene, Manchester, Nashua, Hillsborough, Claremont, and Derry
Children’s Learning Center at Dartmouth Hitchcock, Keene
Keene State College Child Development Center (pilot program, spring 2006)

Early Sprouts Program Sites
Keene State College Child Development Center (pilot program, spring 2006)
Children’s Learning Center at Dartmouth Hitchcock, Keene
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Lily Garden Learning Center
University of New Hampshire Child Study & Development Center

Early Sprouts Donor List
Advocates for Healthy Youth
Cheshire Health Foundation
CMH Foundation
Environmental Education Fund of the New Hampshire Charitable Foundation
Gemini Fund of the New Hampshire Charitable Foundation
Hannaford Supermarkets
HNHFoundation
Kiwanis Club of Keene
MacMillin
Monadnock Challenge Fund of the New Hampshire Charitable Foundation
Monadnock United Way
National Gardening Association & Home Depot
National Gardening Association & Garden Supply Company

Early Sprouts Program Sites
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Lily Garden Learning Center
University of New Hampshire Child Study & Development Center

Early Sprouts Garden Project
Gardening and Nutrition for the Young Child

Early Sprouts engages young children in sustainable living practices and healthy eating behaviors at a critical age. Studies show that children by the age of five typically lose their innate ability to regulate the number of calories they consume. The fact that children are frequently offered high-fat and high-sugar foods as a reward or for comfort further leads to a preference for a calorie-rich diet. Exposing preschoolers to the Early Sprouts program when they are young and impressionable not only teaches good habits, but also helps to counter the unhealthy dietary habits that are prevalent in our society.

The current obesity epidemic is the fastest-growing public health concern in the United States, with some of the most dramatic increases observed among preschool-age children. The prevalence of obesity in this age group has more than doubled in the past 30 years. Annual obesity-associated hospital costs for children has more than tripled from $35 million in 1979–1981 to $127 million in 1997–1999. The psychological and associated social burdens are particularly troublesome for overweight children. As early as kindergarten, overweight female children tend to report lower body esteem and perceived cognitive ability compared to healthy-weight female children.

A lifelong diet rich in fruits and vegetables is key to combating obesity. The diets of preschool-age children are, in general, deficient in fruits and vegetables. Only one percent of preschool-age children meet all of the dietary recommendations established by the Food Guide Pyramid. The preschool years represent a critical and opportune period for the development of food preferences and lifelong eating habits: Between the ages of two and five years, children become increasingly responsive to external cues about what and how much they should eat.

Given the dramatic increase in childhood obesity, there is a need for innovative methods that motivate children to develop lifelong nutritious eating habits. Research shows that when children cultivate a school-based garden, they recognize more fruits and vegetables and will choose them more frequently over less healthy eating choices.
The Early Sprouts Program

At Keene State College, the nutrition and early childhood education faculty have collaborated to develop the 24-week Early Sprouts Program. Early Sprouts is a research-based nutrition and gardening curriculum for the preschool years. The program includes planting raised organic garden beds, using the senses to experience the target vegetables, and preparing meals focused on that crop. The six target vegetables represent a variety of colors and plant types: carrots, green beans, bell peppers, tomatoes, chard, and butternut squash. Training and support for classroom teachers and family outreach is also included. The curriculum is designed to increase children’s food preferences toward the six target vegetables with the goal of having them choose to eat more of the target foods.

Specifically, the curriculum helps children accept rather than reject new foods by exposing them to target vegetables several times. When children are given repeated opportunities to taste a new food, we provide a positive presentation that encourages them to be open to trying something new. Research suggests that it takes five to ten exposures to a new food for preschool-age children to become comfortable with it.

Preschool educators are well positioned to aid children in the development of positive dietary choices. Children’s gardens can serve as an ideal setting for nutrition education and experiences. Gardens provide a context for experiential learning and allow children to observe and care for vegetables throughout their lifecycle. By developing a connection to the natural world, children gain an understanding of the source of the foods they consume. As the fall frost arrives, local grocers supply vegetables to continue the Early Sprouts Program throughout the school year.

The program presents teachers with innovative ways to use fruits and vegetables in the classroom by offering nutritionally sound recipes geared for young children and support for tasting and using new vegetables. Recognizing the critical role that families play during the early childhood years, the program also includes a family-based component that supports the extension and continuation of the new food experiences into the home. Analysis of the program has shown its effectiveness at increasing children’s food preferences toward target vegetables and changing dietary habits at the household level.

Curriculum

Each week a target vegetable is featured. At the start of the week, the children engage in a sensory exploration of the vegetable. This exploration is followed by a cooking activity featuring a recipe using the target vegetable. At the end of the week, the children pack a take-home prep kit, which includes the recipe and all needed ingredients, with the goal of reinforcing the healthy eating and food preparation experiences at the family level.

Sensory Exploration

The sensory exploration helps children overcome their natural tendency to reject new foods by having them use all their senses to explore a vegetable. Children are encouraged to smell, touch, taste, listen to, and look at the target vegetable before they taste it — making them more willing to try a new food.

Recipe/Cooking

Children are invited to participate in each step of the recipe preparation as developmentally appropriate — measuring, cutting, (with safe tools), mixing, and preparing foods for serving. The recipes, in addition to featuring the six target vegetables, were formulated to use low-fat dairy products, healthy fats, whole grains, and reduced amounts of sodium and sugar (as compared to commercially available snack products).

Family Involvement

Preschools and childcare centers can serve as a vehicle for creating behavioral change at the family level. Social modeling by family (as well as peers) plays a particularly key role in the early development of food preferences. The families of the children participating in the Early Sprouts Program are kept informed through articles in the centers’ monthly newsletters. Families are encouraged to participate in classroom-based sensory and cooking activities and are invited to attend food-based special events and family nutrition education sessions. The weekly take-home prep kit, packed by the children, creates another tasting exposure for the child.

The Early Sprouts Program engages pre-school-age children and their families in a unique healthy-lifestyle learning program centered around a working garden. Cooking and tasting sessions familiarize children with healthy food and snack choices. Sending a recipe home with the needed ingredients engages the entire family in the program. The program begins with a garden as a way of connecting children to their food supply through the seed-to-table experience, using food as a unifying concept. Experiences in the garden foster an understanding of how the natural world sustains us and provides environmental and social well-being. This leads to environmental stewardship and good nutritional choices at an early age, offering great promise for a lifetime of healthy living.

Recipe

Confetti Corn Muffins

Ingredients

- Vegetable oil cooking spray
- ½ cup bell pepper
- ¼ cup shredded sharp cheddar cheese
- 1 cup cornmeal
- ½ cup white whole-wheat flour
- ¼ teaspoon salt
- 1 teaspoon baking powder
- ½ teaspoon baking soda
- 1¾ cups low-fat plain yogurt
- 3 tablespoons honey
- 2 large eggs
- 3 tablespoons canola or safflower oil

Basic Method

- Preheat oven to 400° Fahrenheit.
- Coat muffin tins well with vegetable oil cooking spray.
- Clean, de-seed and finely dice bell pepper and set aside.
- Combine cornmeal, flour, salt, baking powder, and baking soda in large mixing bowl.
- Whisk together yogurt, honey, eggs, and oil in medium mixing bowl.
- Create a well in center of the dry ingredient mixture and fill with wet mixture. Gently stir batter until all dry ingredients are incorporated. Do not over-stir.
- Gently fold ½ cup shredded cheddar cheese into the batter.
- Use a ladle to fill oiled muffin tins to about ¼ full. Sprinkle the diced bell peppers onto the tops of the uncooked muffins, followed by the remaining 1¾ cups cheddar cheese.
- Bake 15-20 minutes or until muffins are golden brown. Allow to cool slightly before removing from pans. Transfer to lined basket, serve, and enjoy!

Benefits of select Confetti Corn Muffins ingredients

- Cornmeal: a minimally processed whole grain containing dietary fiber, nutrients, and minerals.
- White whole-wheat flour: a whole-grain flour milled from a naturally milder wheat grain variety — often more appealing to children’s palates. In addition to offering a sweeter taste, it is also a source of fiber, nutrients, and minerals.
- Low-fat plain yogurt: an excellent calcium-rich food choice (compared to flavored yogurts, plain yogurt is low in sugar). Yogurt can be used to replace some of the fat and add moisture to baked goods. Many “kid-friendly” yogurts contain large amounts of added sugar. An easy way to judge the amount of sugar in an item is to remember that 4 grams of sugar = 1 teaspoon.
- Honey: a minimally processed, natural sweetener; also, if produced locally, honey is believed to help build tolerance to allergens.
- Canola oil: a heart-healthy fat. Children need a higher amount of fat in their diets than do adults, but it is important to choose heart-healthy fats for people of all ages.
- Bell peppers: a sweet, child-friendly vegetable, rich in vitamin C, beta carotene, and dietary fiber.
- Sharp cheddar cheese: a calcium- and protein-rich food, but also a source of saturated fat. “Sharp” cheddar was selected because of its strong flavor, allowing less cheese to be used without compromising the taste.

“It’s easier to teach a behavior than to change one…”
— Dr. Susan Lynch
Pediatrician and N.H.’s First Lady

Early Sprouts Garden Project

An interdisciplinary approach to preventing childhood obesity, developed by the departments of Health Science, Education, and Psychology at Keene State College

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How Do These Sacks Stack Up?

A healthy lunch isn’t all about fat and calories! Healthy nutrients, calcium, protein and fiber are important considerations, as well as concerns such as added sugar, sodium, saturated fat, and artificial colors and flavors.

Below, you’ll find the contents of some sack lunches from a school-age summer program. How do you think they stack up nutritionally?

- Which lunch do you think has the most fat? Saturated fat?
- Which might have the most sugar? Sodium?
- Assuming that portion sizes are met for foods that are present, which lunches meet USDA nutritional guidelines?
- Which lunches do you think are the least nutritious, overall?
- Which lunches do you think might be the healthiest overall?

#1
Chicken nugget “Lunchable” (prepared meal)
Fruit cocktail (single serving cup)
Yogurt-dipped granola bar
Sports drink

#2
Ham & American cheese sandwich on white bread, with mayo
Nacho cheese tortilla chips (1.5 oz bag)
Pickle
Gummy fruit snacks
Chocolate sandwich cookies
Fruit drink pouch

#3
Vegetable beef soup (thermos), reduced sodium
Whole grain crackers
String cheese
Strawberries
2% chocolate milk

#4
Turkey sandwich on wheat bread with mustard, lettuce, and tomato
Clementine tangerine
Carrot sticks
3 chocolate candy kisses
Reduced fat milk

#5
Rice cake w/ low-fat cream cheese
Cherry tomatoes
Celery sticks
Sugar-free cherry gelatin cup
Diet orange soda (sugar-free)

#6
Apples
Graham crackers
Peanut butter dip
Cheese cubes
Bottled water
How Do These Sacks Stack Up?

Below, you will find nutritional information for the lunches on page 48.

**Lunch # 1**
*Chicken nugget “Lunchable”, fruit cocktail, yogurt-dipped granola bar, sports drink*

*The basics*: This lunch contains 670 calories and 10 grams of fat.

*Nutritional benefits*: 14 grams of protein; 12% RDA (recommended daily allowance) of calcium and iron; small amounts of vitamins A and C

*More to consider*: 5 grams of saturated fat; 780 mg sodium; contains the equivalent of 25.5 teaspoons of added sugar; contains artificial colors.

**Lunch # 2**
*Ham & cheese sandwich, nacho cheese tortilla chips, pickle, fruit snacks, chocolate cookies, fruit drink pouch*

*The basics*: 1189 calories and 50 grams of fat

*Nutritional benefits*: 24 grams of protein; over 100% RDA of vitamin C; 25% RDA calcium; 15% vitamin D; small amounts of vitamin E and iron

*More to consider*: 11.8 grams saturated fat; 2279 mg sodium; contains artificial colors and the equivalent of 16 teaspoons of added sugar

**Lunch # 3**
*Vegetable soup, crackers, string cheese, strawberries, 2% chocolate milk*

*The basics*: 439 calories and 12.1 grams fat

*Nutritional benefits*: 20.7 grams of protein; over 100% RDA of vitamin C; 48% RDA calcium; 31% A; 12% iron; crackers are a good source of fiber

*More to consider*: 6 grams saturated fat; 548 mg sodium; contains the equivalent of 6.5 teaspoons of added sugar.
**Lunch # 4**  
*Turkey sandwich, Clementine, carrot sticks, chocolate kisses, reduced fat milk*

*The basics:* 483 calories and 13 grams of fat

*Nutritional benefits:* 20 grams of protein; over 100% RDA of vitamins C and A; 29% RDA of calcium, 14% iron; wheat bread is a good source of fiber

*More to consider:* 5 grams saturated fat; 704 mg of sodium; contains the equivalent of 2 teaspoons of added sugar

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**Lunch # 5**  
*Rice cake with low fat cream cheese, cherry tomatoes, celery sticks, sugar-free gelatin cup, diet drink*

*The basics:* 85 calories and 2 grams of fat

*Nutritional benefits:* 5 grams of protein; 48% RDA vitamin C; 14% vitamin A; 5% calcium

*More to consider:* 252 mg sodium; contains large amounts of artificial colors and sweeteners

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**Lunch # 6**  
*Apples, graham crackers, peanut butter, bell pepper rings, cheese cubes, bottled water*

*The basics:* 435 calories and 28.5 grams of fat

*Nutritional benefits:* 18.5 grams of protein; 98% RDA of vitamin C; 35% calcium; 34% vitamin A; 34% iron

*More to consider:* 12.5 grams saturated fat; 510 mg sodium; contains the equivalent of 4 teaspoons of added sugar
Analysis of Sack Lunches

The American Health Association recommends the following nutritional guidelines for children ages 4 – 8.

- Most children in this age range need a total of between 1400 and 1800 calories daily.

- Approximately 25 – 35% of a growing child’s daily caloric intake should come from fats; unhealthy saturated fats should make up less than 10% of the daily caloric intake.

  This generally equals no more that 40 – 60 grams of fat per day, and no more than 15 – 18 grams of saturated fat.

- Most children in this age range need approximately .5 grams of protein per pound of body weight. For example, a 60 pound child should consume approximately 30 grams of protein daily.

- Total daily intake of sodium should not exceed 1900 mg.

- Sugar occurs naturally in fruit, starchy foods, etc. Intake of products with added sweeteners, such as refined sugar and corn syrup, should be limited.

When assessing the nutritional values of a single meal, it is also important to consider other meals and snacks that the child will consume during the day.

Of the lunches listed in this article, lunch #2 (ham sandwich) contains almost a full day’s supply of calories and fat, as well as more sodium intake than is advisable in an entire day!

On the other hand, lunch #5 (rice cakes with cream cheese), is so low in calories and fat that it cannot provide the food energy that a child needs to thrive. Children of any weight who do not get enough calories, protein, and nutrients can suffer muscle loss and other health problems. “Diet” foods are rarely a healthy choice for children, even when weight loss is a goal.

Lunches #3 (soup), #4 (turkey sandwich), and #6 (apples and peanut butter) provide relatively healthy lunch options, offering higher amounts of nutrients, protein, and fiber, along with reasonable amounts of calories, saturated fat, and added sugar.
The United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) requires the following components for lunch for school-age children in a childcare setting.

- Protein source, such as meat, cheese, egg, beans, or peanut butter
- Two or more servings of fruits or vegetables
- A serving of bread, or a bread alternate, such as enriched pasta.
- A serving of liquid milk

Lunches #3 and #4 met these requirements.

For more information on USDA nutritional guidelines for all ages, look for Appendix A of the Arkansas Minimum Licensing Requirements for Child Care Family Homes book or Appendix C in the Arkansas Minimum Licensing Requirements for Child Care Centers book.

Whether the children bring meals/snacks from home or eat food prepared at school or childcare, attention to nutrition can foster healthy eating habits and help ensure that children receive the wholesome foods that they need to learn and grow.

Find out more about the nutritional content of the foods that you, your family, and the children in your care eat. Check out the “Food-a-Pedia” at

www.myfoodpyramid.gov

Find out more about reading and interpreting product nutrition labels at

www.fda.gov/Food/LabelingNutrition/ConsumerInformation/
Recipes

The following recipes were generously shared by members of the Arkansas Family Child Care Association.

Seasoned Baked Potatoes

1 lb potatoes cut into wedges, bite size pieces, shapes etc.  
1/4 cup olive oil  
1 Tbsp seasoning: Italian, Mexican, or salt and pepper  
1 - 2 tsp salt

Place all ingredients in a large Ziploc bag and have the children shake it up! Pour seasoned potatoes into a large foil covered baking pan (I use a cookie sheet). Bake at 350 covered for 30min or until tender. Remove cover to brown, you may need to stir a few times.

*Courtesy of Linda Scarbrough, Ms. Linda’s Home Preschool, Fayetteville*

Fresh Fruit & Veggie Ideas

- Serve yogurt with 1/2 cup of Cheerios, grape nuts, or other cereal or with 1/2 cup of fresh fruit per child for snack. They love it, it’s easy and nutritious.
- Use fresh spinach instead of lettuce for salads. Dark green spinach arranged on a brightly colored dish (yellow is really pretty) or platter with tomato wedges in the center is very attractive. Our kids love it.
- Kristi cuts the end off of a stalk of celery and puts it into the middle of a platter, she arranges the celery stalks like spokes around the stalk (which resembles a rose—sometimes she uses food coloring to color the end of the stalk). Then she lays purple grapes in a row down each celery stalk.

*Courtesy of Rita Neve & Kristi Smith, Mother’s Touch, Booneville*
Zucchini Strips

3 medium-size zucchini
1 egg, beaten
2 Tbsp. plain yogurt
2 Tbsp. grated Parmesan cheese
Non-stick cooking spray
Spaghetti sauce

Wash and cut ends from zucchini. Cut each zucchini lengthwise into 8 spears. In a shallow container, mix egg and yogurt.

In another container, combine bread crumbs and Parmesan cheese. Coat zucchini strips in egg mixture, then in bread crumbs.

Grease a baking sheet with cooking spray and spread coated zucchini spears on baking sheet.

Bake at 450 for 10 minutes, or until lightly browned. Serve warm with spaghetti sauce for dipping.

Courtesy of Mary Studebaker, Miss Mary’s Preschool, Fayetteville

Oven-Baked Carrot Fries

1 1/2 lbs. carrots
1 tsp. sugar
2 Tbsp. olive oil
1/2 tsp. salt
2 Tbsp. finely chopped pinch of pepper
Fresh rosemary

Preheat oven to 425. Line a shallow pan with foil. Using a sharp knife, slice away the tip and end of each carrot; peel each completely. Cut carrots in half cross-wise, then cut length-wise, then cut length-wise again.

In a mixing bowl, combine the carrot sticks, oil, rosemary, salt and pepper. Stir till all are evenly coated. Place carrots in pan, spreading sticks out as much as possible. Bake for 20 minutes, or until carrots are tender. Serve hot or at room temperature.

Makes 4 servings

Courtesy of Debbie Mays, Bright Beginnings, Siloam Springs
Omelet in a Bag

This recipe is TEACHER SUPERVISED and DIRECTED. Children should not be left unattended while cooking.

**Ingredients:**
- eggs (1 per child)
- chopped, cooked ham
- minced onion
- chopped red and green bell peppers
- shredded cheddar cheese
- salt and pepper

**Utensils, etc.:**
- bowls for ingredients
- quart size zipper-seal freezer bags (1 per 2 children)
- 8 quart or larger stock pot
- long tongs
- long oven mitts
- Stove or portable cook-top unit

**Directions:**

1. Put 5 quarts of water in a large stock pot and bring to a rolling boil. (Very important to keep water at a rolling boil) Use this teachable moment to talk about safety around the stove and how very hot the water is, because it is boiling.
2. Need one quart size zip-lock FREEZER baggie for every two children.
3. Get the pre-diced ham, onion, & red/green peppers and shredded cheddar cheese out and open the baggies.
4. Crack two eggs into a baggie, burp out the air and ZIP CLOSED TIGHTLY!
5. Have the children squish up the eggs inside the closed bag vigorously with hands.
6. Open baggies and add onion, green/red peppers and boiled ham.
7. Add about a teaspoon of cheddar cheese. WARNING: Too much cheese will cause your omelet to stick inside the baggie!
8. BURP YOUR BAGGIE WELL....AND ZIP IT LOCKED. (TEACHER SHOULD CHECK THIS)
9. Place two baggies at a time in the pot of boiling water. The bags will fill up with more air, but it should not burst.
10. Boil the omelets for EXACTLY 13 MINUTES, NO MORE OR NO LESS!
11. TEACHER removes the omelet with tongs. CAUTION: The bag will be HOT! HOT! HOT!
12. Carefully slide omelet out of the bag onto a plate, add salt and pepper to taste, and enjoy.

_Banner image of a chef_.

_Courtesy of Cheryl Stapf, Children are Special, Pottsville_
Jambalaya

2 TBS olive oil
3 skinless chicken breast cut into bite size pieces
1 large onion, chopped
2 large cloves garlic
1 red pepper
1 tsp paprika
1 tsp dried thyme
1 can chopped tomatoes (14.5oz)
3 cups chicken broth
1 1/3 cups uncooked brown rice
1/3 cup peas
Salt and pepper

Cook chicken, red pepper, garlic and onions in oil until chicken is browned. Add paprika, thyme, rice, chicken broth, tomatoes and peas; bring to a boil. Reduce heat, add salt and pepper to taste, cover and simmer for 35 min or until stock is absorbed and rice is done.

*Courtesy of Linda Scarbrough, Ms. Linda’s Home Preschool, Fayetteville*

Peach or Apple Crisp

4 or 5 peaches or apples
1 cup Grape Nuts cereal
1/4 cup apple juice concentrate
1 teaspoon cinnamon
margarine

Peel and slice peaches or apples. Place slices in a greased pie pan. Stir in cereal, juice, and cinnamon. Top with a few dabs of margarine. Bake at 350 for 25 minutes.

*Courtesy of Mary Studebaker, Ms. Mary’s Preschool, Fayetteville*
Purple Cow

¼ cup grape juice
1 cup milk
1 banana

1. Place all ingredients in the blender
2. Put lid on tightly.
3. Blend on high until smooth.

*Courtesy of Debbie Mays, Bright Beginnings, Siloam Springs*

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Pizza Soup

**Ingredients**

- Cheddar & mozzarella cheeses
- Tomato soup
- Lean ground beef (browned and drained)
- Pepperoni slices

Children stir their choice of ingredients into warm tomato soup. A great snack or meal item; make sure that children have the correct amount of meat and cheese to meet nutritional requirements.

*Courtesy of Rita Neve & Kristi Smith, Mother’s Touch, Booneville*

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Sweet Potato Chips

- Sweet potatoes
- Cinnamon (optional)

Peel sweet potatoes and slice into very thin rounds. Soak in ice water for 15 minutes. Pat slices dry and place on a greased baking sheet.

Sprinkle lightly with cinnamon, if you wish. Bake at 450 for 8 to 11 minutes.

*Courtesy of Mary Studebaker, Ms, Mary’s Preschool, Fayetteville*
Take a Bite Out of a Great Book!

Connect literacy with simple, nutritious food experiences using one book a week, every week of the school year.

**Alvie Eats Soup, by Ross Collins**
Kids can cook and sample a soup that Alvie would love. In a slow cooker, combine 3 cans low sodium beef, chicken, or veggie broth, 6 cups water, 4 stalks chopped celery, 6 chopped carrots, ½ cup chopped parsley, and 1 cup barley. Cover and cook on low for 6 hours.

**Apple Farmer Annie, by Monica Wellington**
Sample several different varieties of fresh apples. Make a graph of favorites.

**Apple Picking Time, by Michele B. Slawson**
Make applesauce. Peel, core, and slice 8 – 10 apples. (A spiral slicer lets kids help!) Combine with ½ cup water in a slow cooker and cook on low for 4 hours. When apples are very soft, season to taste with cinnamon and sugar. Cook 30 more minutes, mash any remaining chunks, and enjoy.

**Bebe Goes Shopping, by Susan Middleton Elya**
Ask parents to donate clean, empty containers from healthy foods. Possibilities include cereal boxes, juice cartons, oatmeal canisters, and yogurt cups. Set up a grocery store in your dramatic play area.

**Bee Bim Bop, by Linda Sue Park**
Make a chart of your children’s favorite supper-time foods and try your hand at making Bee Bim Bop using the recipe at the back of the book.
**Blueberries for Sal, by Robert McCloskey**
Sample fresh blueberries, as well as all-fruit blueberry reserves spread on whole-grain bread. How do your children think that the preserves are made? Make a chart of responses.

**Carla’s Sandwich, by Debbie Herman**
Carla likes some pretty strange things on her sandwiches! Set up a sandwich making station with whole grain bread and choices such as sliced cheese, peanut butter, all-fruit spread, whipped cream cheese, sliced lunch meat, and pickles. What will your children put on their sandwiches if given the freedom to choose? (By the way, using a butter knife for spreading is fantastic fine motor practice!)

**Chicks and Salsa, by Aaron Reynolds**
For a no-spice, kid-friendly salsa, combine 2 cans diced tomatoes (almost completely drained), 1 can diced green chilies, 2 tbsp of fresh lime juice, and a dash of salt in a blender. Mix and chill. Sample with baked tortilla chips.

**Cool as a Cucumber, by Sally Smallwood**
At meals and snacks, discuss food temperatures and textures. Start an ongoing list of descriptive words, such as “crunchy”, “mushy”, and “sweet”. Also, mix a packet of ranch dressing mix with plain, low fat yogurt to try with cucumber slices.

**D.W. the Picky Eater, by Marc Brown**
No picky eaters here! Encourage your children to taste test some new fruits, such as passion fruit or kiwi.

**Daddy Makes the Best Spaghetti, by Anna Grossnickle Hines**
Examine and describe different sizes and shapes of pasta. Use a hot plate to make spaghetti. (Supervise very closely!) Enjoy your noodles with red sauce, or just a pat of butter!

**Eating the Alphabet, by Louis Ehlert**
Make a collage with pictures of fruits and vegetables cut from magazines. Also consider “taste testing” some foods from the book that children may not have experienced before.
**Feast for Ten, by Cathryn Falwell**
Have your own feast for ten, or however many children you might have! Send a zipper baggy home with each child, along with a note asking them return it with as many of a healthy food item as you have children in the classroom. For example, if you have 15 children, one child might bring 15 strawberries, while another brings 15 baby carrots, and yet another brings 15 small boxes of raisins. Wash all produce before serving. Allow children to help serve the feast as you practice counting and one-to-one correspondence.

**Green Eggs and Ham, by Dr. Seuss**
Allow each child to crack an egg into a large mixing bowl. (Wash hands before and after!) Add a dash of green food coloring and a splash of milk, and mix well with a whisk or fork. Scramble in an electric skillet and enjoy, with or without ham. Discuss the importance of trying new foods.

**Gregory the Terrible Eater, by Mitchell Sharmat**
Discuss with children: what do your parents want you to eat? Why? Discuss ways that healthy food choices help our bodies. Taste healthy items from each food group and work with children to sort photos of foods into food groups.

**Growing Colors, by Bruce McMillan**
Make a rainbow fruit salad with strawberries, canned mandarin oranges, banana or pineapple, green and purple grapes, and blueberries. Children can help slice ingredients with butter knives, then mix together and enjoy!

**Growing Vegetable Soup, by Louis Ehlert**
If possible, take a field trip to visit a garden. Or, plant your own seedling cherry tomatoes in a container.

**Handa’s Surprise, by Eileen Brown**
Sometimes simple activities are best! Provide each child with a Clementine tangerine. Let them peel it on their own (or with a little help), and talk about the tastes, smells, and textures. How are tangerines different from oranges? From grapefruit?
How Are You Peeling? Foods with Moods, by Saxton Freymann
Make veggie faces. Toast wheat bread and spread with softened or whipped cream cheese. Encourage each child to create their own, unique face or design using cut vegetables. One possibility: round carrot slice eyes, a cherry tomato nose, a bell pepper slice mouth, and baby spinach hair! Don’t forget to take photos of the children’s creations.

How Groundhog’s Garden Grew, by Lynne Cherry
Soak dry beans in cool water for 24 hours. Help each child place 1 – 3 beans in a quart-sized zipper bag with a folded, damp paper towel. Tape or hang in a sunny window and watch for growth. These beans won’t be edible, but they give insight into exactly how groundhog’s garden grew!

Inch by Inch, by Leo Lionni
What would happen if the inchworm ventured into a vegetable garden? Get up close and personal with heads of purple and green cabbage by examining them with magnifying glasses. Older preschoolers may want to measure them, as well. After the children have finished exploring, wash the produce and use a food processor to make itty-bitty bits, like an inchworm might eat. Toss with a little dressing and enjoy your “caterpillar’s coleslaw”.

One Watermelon Seed, by Cecelia Barker Lottridge
Cut and enjoy a fresh watermelon. Make a collection of seeds from various fruits, including watermelon, apple, orange, and pumpkin. Children can use ice cube trays to sort and count the clean, dry seeds.

Popcorn, by Frank Asch
Spread a clean sheet or tablecloth across a large table. Place a hot air popcorn popper in the middle of the table, and add popcorn. Ask kids for predictions of what they think will happen next, then have kids stand way back, and plug in the popper, without the chute! Children can collect and eat popcorn from the clean cloth, but remind them not to eat popcorn from the floor. Later, ask them to predict how things might change if you add the chute to the popper. Test their theories. Remember: popcorn is a choking hazard that should be eaten under close supervision by preschoolers, and not at all by toddlers in child care settings.
**Pumpkin Circle, by Greg Levenson**
Examine a pumpkin. What do they think will be inside? Make a chart of children’s responses. Open the pumpkin to find out, then scoop seeds for toasting. Rinse well and place in a single layer on a baking sheet. Spritz with non-stick cooking spray, sprinkle lightly with salt, and bake at 325 degrees for 25-30 minutes, stirring every 10 minutes.

**Stone Soup (various adaptations available)**
Invite each child to bring one vegetable from home to add to your own pot of stone soup! (If you use a real stone, wash and sanitize very well!)

**Sun Bread, by Elisa Klevin**
Bring in a bread maker and allow children to help mix ingredients for whole grain bread. After you’ve savored the smell of baking bread all day, make your own fresh butter by placing a clean marble in a clean, empty baby food jar, along with 2 tablespoons of heavy cream. Replace lids securely. Put on some fun music and encourage the children to shake, shake, shake their jars until they have a dab of thick, creamy, butter. (You’ll be able to tell when the marble stops moving!) Spread on fresh bread and enjoy!

**The Giant Carrot, by Jan Peck**
Encourage children to explore fresh, raw carrots. Wash the carrots. Cut the tops off about 1 inch from the end and set aside. Place the rest of the carrots in a vegetable steamer and cook over boiling water until tender. Remove from heat and let cool. Children should be able to help slice the cooked carrots with a butter knife, then taste. How do cooked carrots differ from raw carrots? Which do children prefer?

Place the carrot tops cut side down, in a saucer of water on in a sunny windowsill. Cover with a clear, plastic cup for a day or two, watering as needed, until you begin to see growth. At this point, you can remove the cup and continue to watch your carrot grow.
The Little Mouse, the Red Ripe Strawberry, and the Big Hungry Bear, by Don Wood
Children can wash fresh strawberries and slice using a butter knife. Make berry smoothies by combining sliced strawberries, low fat milk, fat-free vanilla yogurt, and ice cubes in a blender. Mix well and serve sample-size smoothies in small paper cups.

The Little Red Hen Makes a Pizza, by Philemon Sturges
Make miniature pizzas by spreading low-sodium tomato sauce on whole wheat English muffins. Top with mozzarella cheese and fresh vegetables. Broil in a toaster oven until cheese is melted.

The Ugly Vegetables, by Grace Lin
Why does the girl in this story feel that the vegetables are ugly? If given the choice, would the children in your group rather have a flower garden, or a vegetable garden?

Have children examine red, yellow, orange, and green bell peppers. What words can they use to describe them? Taste -test the bell peppers. Do they all taste the same, or different? Which color pepper would children say is the sweetest? The spiciest? Take a vote to determine the group’s favorite pepper.

Tops and Bottoms, by Janet Stevens
Examine photos of lots of different types of plants, including stalks of corn, carrots, lettuce, and strawberries. With each, ask which they would prefer to eat – the top? Or the bottom? Explore a fresh pineapple with the children. Do they think they would prefer to eat the top or the bottom of this plant? Slice the pineapple to see – and taste! – what is inside!
Internet Resources

Ready for more information on ways to help children and families form healthy habits? There are dozens of amazing internet sites designed to help you do just that.

Here are a few favorites.

BAM! Body and Mind
www.bam.gov

Body and mind is an online site for kids ages 9 -13, created by the Center for Disease Control. Portions of the site may also be appropriate for children in kindergarten and beyond, especially with adult assistance. Appealing, comic book-style graphics, fun quizzes and games, and an interactive format give this site kid appeal. Topics include fitness, nutrition, safety, body changes, and disease control.

A teacher’s corner offers tips and resources for integrating BAM topics into group projects and discussions. Activities include decoding advertising to make smart consumer choices, translating Barbie doll and action figure measurements to real life proportions when learning about body image, hands-on experiences to learn about the body’s stress mechanisms, and hand washing and microbe experiments.

SA, E, MS

Chewy Café
www.chewycafe.com

Supported by The Care Foundation and the Blue & You Foundation for a Healthier Arkansas, this site focuses on nutrition and cooking skills for children in upper elementary school and beyond. Look for instructional cooking videos, mini cookbooks, and interactive website features, including the “Energy Factory”, where kids can learn about nutrition through games. Content is correlated with the Arkansas Frameworks for education. Parent and educator information are also included.

SA, E, MS
Dr. Katz’s Turn the Tide Foundation

www.turnthetidefoundation.org

Created in 2007 by Dr. David Katz, the Turn the Tide Foundation focuses on practical solutions to fight obesity, heart disease, diabetes, and other chronic health conditions in children and adults. Two of Dr. Katz’s programs, listed below, may be of use to child care providers. In addition, an email newsletter providing healthy recipes and fitness tips is available.

- **ABC for Fitness** stands for “Activity Bursts for the Classroom”. Designed for school-age students, this program encourages the implementation of brief periods of physical activity throughout the school day. A manual is available free of charge; consider sharing it with the elementary and middle schools in your area.

- Another Dr. Katz program, the **Nutrition Detectives** program, focuses on teaching elementary school children to use “5 Clues” to read and decipher packaged food labels and make healthy food choices. A second facet of the program encourages high school-aged students to teach younger children. Materials, including a DVD, interactive PowerPoint presentations, and booklets, are available free of charge, with a small shipping fee for the DVD.

Eat Smart. Play Hard. Healthy Lifestyle.

www.fns.usda.gov/eatsmartplayhardhealthylifestyle/

Sponsored by the USDA, this website offers a wealth of information and tools for families, including a habit tracking system, food and fitness ideas, shopping and holiday tips, and more. Teachers, check the “Kids” link for free printed resources for your families!

Eat Smart, Move More

www.eatsmartmovemorenc.com

This comprehensive North Carolina site includes success stories, resource toolkits, and information on the NAP SACC preschool assessment program.

All providers

Arkansas Children’s Week 2010
Fit Kids

www.fitkidsnc.com

Sponsored by the North Carolina Health and Wellness Trust Fund, this site includes fitness resources for adults working with children in grades K and up, at home, and school, and in afterschool care. Look for sections designed to meet the needs of parents, teachers, administrators, and community leaders. Membership is required.

$A

Growing Up Wild

www.projectwild.org/GrowingUpWild

Exploring outdoors is a fun and natural way for children to increase physical activity. Here, you will find early childhood education resources focusing on nature and wildlife. These include 27 hands-on activities in a free field guide, as well as suggestions for connecting outdoor exploration and learning to other areas of your curriculum. Also check out the link to Project Wild for school-agers.

$PS, $A

Healthy Habits for Life (Sesame Workshop)

www.sesameworkshop.org/initiatives/health/healthyhabits

Designed especially for child care providers, this site uses popular Sesame Street characters to teach about nutrition, fitness, and health. Look for a comprehensive printable toolkit, including a storybook, songs, games, food experiences, parent newsletters, and more. A complimentary DVD of movement activities is also available.

$IT, $PS

Kidnetic

www.kidnetic.com

Designed for older children and preteens, this site is an outreach of the International Food Information Council, in partnership with a number of health-related institutions and organizations. It includes a wide range of very active games, recipes for healthy snacks and
meals that kids can cook (with adult supervision and/or assistance) and more. Teacher and parent information sections are also included.

Kids Gardening
www.kidsgardening.org
Dedicated to “helping young minds grow”, this site is devoted to inspiring the next generation of gardeners. Comprehensive parent and teacher resource sections include gardening guides, project ideas, grant information, and more. Find gardening pen pals for your group or sign up for the Kids Garden News.

Kids Health
www.kidshealth.org
Featuring sections for kids, teens, parents, and teachers, this site provides articles about health and wellness topics. In addition to discussions about fitness, safety, and general health, there are articles for kids about diseases such as asthma, diabetes, and cancer. These may be suitable to introduce in response to the life experiences of children in middle elementary school and beyond. A handful of quizzes, games, and experiments are also available.

PE Central
www.pecentral.org
Designed for health and physical education teachers, this site includes activity and assessment ideas for pre-kindergarten through high school. Many activities can be adapted to less formal preschool and school-age afterschool/summer care programs. Also look for ideas on field day activities and holiday events. A free newsletter is available.
Team Nutrition

http://healthymeals.nal.usda.gov/

This USDA website offers a wealth of information, including research, food service recipes, meal planning tools, and nutrition and food service guidelines. Printed resource materials for families can be ordered free of charge.

All providers

My Food Pyramid and My Pyramid for Kids

www.mypyramid.gov

Presented by the USDA, the My Pyramid programs offer a huge range of nutrition-related information and activities for all ages. Highlights include:

- **Inside the Pyramid** – An in-depth look at the modern food pyramid, including information on food groups and healthy choices.
- **My Foodapedia** – Designed for adults, this program provides at-a-glance nutritional information for foods and offers side-by-side comparisons of various foods. Which has more calories – Rice Krispies or Chex cereal? Use the Foodapedia and find out!
- **My Pyramid for Kids** – This section of the website is designed for children ages 6 – 11 and their families. Resources include an interactive computer game, an easy-to-understand explanation of the food pyramid, and more. Posters highlighting nutrition and fitness are also available in English and Spanish, and a resource pack is offered.
- **My Pyramid for Moms** – Nutritional information especially tailored for expectant mothers and parents of infants. Includes information on weight gain, dietary needs, breastfeeding, and special health considerations, and offers a menu planner for pregnant and breastfeeding women.
- **My Pyramid for Preschoolers** – Written for parents and also helpful for those who plan child care meals and nutrition activities, this section includes meal and snack ideas, tips for picky eaters, charts of typical child growth and development, and suggestions for active play with children ages 2-5. Parents can create a customized meal plan for their child.
- **Rate What YOU Ate** – A free-of-charge resource for teaching teens to plan and track consumption of foods and beverages. Teens can print out reports of daily and weekly food choices and view customized tips for making healthier choices. A specialized version of the program is also available for pregnant teenagers.

All providers