

Oregon State University

Let's Go Eat Healthy!

An activity guide filled with ideas for nutrition-related activities,
games, stories, crafts and resources for use with the Journey to a
Healthy Child Care Home Program



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Welcome to *Let's Go Eat Healthy!*

Eating healthy and learning about food are important activities for children's health and development. Children learn a great deal when they eat healthy foods and learn to try new foods while they are in your care. These positive experiences help them develop healthful eating habits that can last a lifetime.

Hands-on play activities that present food related concepts, allow children to use all of their senses to explore ideas about food and eating healthy. These experiences may help children accept a greater variety of new foods. For example, learning about the food groups helps children focus on the different kinds of foods they eat. Learning about why it is important to eat a variety of foods builds their knowledge about how food fuels their bodies for growing, thinking and playing. Learning to listen to their body's signs of hunger or fullness helps children become aware of the signals their body sends to them about eating "just enough." These kinds of lessons may help children learn to make healthy eating choices.

Providing activities that encourage children to explore these and other messages about healthy eating, is fun when the lessons are presented through play! *Let's Go Eat Healthy* is a tool for child care providers to use to help children play and learn about food and healthy eating. *Let's Go Eat Healthy* provides many ideas for activities and play that include food related concepts. The activities are organized alphabetically. They list the materials you will need and suggest how the activity can be presented. Tips for changing the activities are also provided to spark your ideas for other ways to play.

Remember to follow basic safety habits when cooking with children, such as having children wash their hands, touch only the foods they will eat if the recipe is not cooked, keep away from hot cooking equipment and avoid any foods that may cause an allergic reaction or be a risk for choking. You can find more safety tips for cooking with kids in the *Let's Go Cookbook!*

Have fun trying these activities to boost children's knowledge about food and healthy eating! Now – *Let's Go Eat Healthy!*



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Let's Go Eat Healthy

Activities & Play Ideas



Alphabet Soup Pictures

Tip: Help children learn the alphabet while teaching about healthy foods for our bodies and brains!

Get ready:

- Alphabet shaped dry noodles
- Drawing paper and construction paper scraps (of various colors)
- Plastic carton circles, bowls or plates – about 6 inches in diameter (to use as a drawing pattern for making a “soup bowl”)
- Scissors, crayons or marking pens
- Glue sticks, or glue and q-tips for spreading and making glue dots

Get going:

1. Tell the children that you have supplies to make an alphabet soup picture.
2. Provide each child a paper for the picture.
3. Offer the circle patterns and drawing tools. Invite the children to draw around the circle to make a “soup bowl.”
4. Show children the glue and alphabet noodles. Invite them to glue some of the noodles inside their soup bowl. Tell them that the noodles are made of healthy grains, and are good food for our bodies and brains. Encourage children to name the letters as they work.
5. Invite children to color in, or cut the colored paper scraps into vegetables to paste in their soup.
6. Invite each child to name their soup.

Next time:

- Make a vegetable soup for lunch and include some alphabet noodles.
- Offer magazine pictures of vegetables to cut and glue in the “soup.”
- Encourage children to glue the alphabet noodles to form their names.



Asian Restaurant – Dramatic Play

Tip: Check with a local Asian Restaurant to see if they would donate a menu, chop sticks or some take-out boxes to use for props. Look in the yellow pages of the phone book for a take-out menu from an Asian restaurant. ***Note:** Ask your families to save empty food boxes and clean containers that depict Asian foods. Look for Asian decorations, and ask families for advice to set up your pretend restaurant.

Get ready:

- Space in the indoor or outdoor setting to set up your restaurant.
- Tables – for the food preparation area and for customer seating.
- Restaurant prop ideas:
 - Plastic food models, or pictures of Asian foods (laminated or cover with clear contact paper so you can use the pictures again and again), and empty boxes and containers depicting foods such as: noodles, rice, canned and fresh vegetables; plastic condiment squeeze bottles (clean and dry) for sauces.
 - Consider offering bowls of dry rice and rice noodles, or cut yarn to make noodles
 - Plates, bowls, chop sticks
 - Table cloth or placemats, pictures of China, Japan, Korea, Thailand and Vietnam for wall décor,
- “Cash box” (a shoe box) or toy cash register and money - use toy/pretend money – or make paper “bills” from lightweight construction or drawing paper and for coins use plastic milk jug container lids or circles cut from paperboard.
- General supplies to support play: markers, crayons and paper for signs and menus.

Get going:

1. Invite the children to help you set up the restaurant. Show them the props, and arrange a kitchen, seating area, and check out counter. Post the pictures and set the tables.
2. Encourage the supermarket play theme. For example, suggest that some children prepare to open the restaurant, while other children dress up to come to eat. Have the cooks set foods onto the plates. Offer the yarn noodles and invite children to pretend to eat using the chopsticks. Have them practice using the chop sticks to move the yarn from a serving bowl to their plate. At lunch time, offer a food with an Asian theme, such as rice noodles with steamed vegetables and pineapple tidbits. Talk about eating the healthy foods.
3. Add or exchange a few new props each day to add interest.

Next time: Add some Asian music – find tunes on the web or check out a CD from your library. Let children help plan an Asian menu and prepare the meal for lunch. Asian rice or Vegetable Stir Fry recipes can be found in *Let's Go Cook!*



Bagel Monsters

Tip: Bagels are a great base for more than just spreads. This activity invites you to make sandwich “faces.” Provide foods from many food groups to make your bagel monster faces.

Get ready:

- Small 1ounce whole wheat bagels (enough for each child to have one half)
- Low-fat cream cheese lite yogurt or peanut butter if there are no peanut or nut allergies
- 1 small crown of broccoli, cut into pieces
- 1 apple, cut into thin slices
- 1 small bunch of grapes, cut in half
- 3-6 slices of low-fat lunch meat and low-fat cheese, cut into strips
- Plates, plastic knives or spreaders

Get going:

1. Place a bagel on each child’s plate. Offer the other food decorations in small bowls.
2. Tell children that you have the makings for Bagel Monsters. Show them that you have foods from the five food groups: bagels from the grain group, broccoli from vegetables, grapes and apples from fruits, meat from the meat group, and low-fat cheese from the milk group.
3. Show children how to spread the cream cheese or peanut butter on their bagel. Assist younger children as needed.
4. Encourage children to use a food from each of the food groups to make their monster face.
5. Once everyone has made a bagel monster, name the different foods on each monster face and see how many food groups are represented.
6. Ask children about other foods that could be used to make faces.
7. Take pictures of the bagel monster faces and post the picture on a bulletin board.

Next time:

- Read the book, *Where the Wild Things Are* before making the bagel monsters. After eating the snack have children dance to the Monster Mash. Find it at: <http://www.blueyze.com/monstermash.html>



Bagging the Fats

Tip: Sometimes we don't know how much fat there is in food until we see the grease spot on our plates or on the bag, or on our slippery fingers! Pre-fried chicken nuggets are an example of a high-fat food. They have a lot of fat compared to a plain baked chicken. Explore this idea using crackers. Talk with the children about how some foods have too much fat, and that we should not eat them everyday – they are “once-in-a-while” foods. Tell them they can tell when foods have too much fat because of how the foods make their fingers slippery and shiny, or by the greasy “spot” on their plates.

Get ready:

- A few butter style crackers (like Ritz) -- enough for each child to taste one and four for the experiment
- A few dry crackers (like low-salt saltine crackers) -- enough for each child to taste one and four for the experiment
- 2 white napkins or 2 paper bags

Get going:

1. Help the children to open and lay the two napkins out flat.
2. Place four butter style crackers on one napkin or in one bag, and four saltines on the other napkin (or in a bag).
3. Fold each napkin over onto the crackers. Let them sit for a few hours.
4. Check back and have children describe what they see – can you see fat stains on the napkin or bag with the butter style crackers? Is this evident on the napkin holding the saltines?
5. Give each child a butter style cracker and a saltine cracker to touch. Ask them which one feels greasy and talk about why. Invite children to taste each cracker too.
6. Tell children that too much fat is not healthy for our bodies. The butter style cracker is called a once-in-a-while food that we don't eat everyday. Tell them that the saltine style cracker is a better choice. Talk about how this experiment reminds us that other foods are better for us if they are cooked without lots of fat. For example, baked chicken is a better choice than fried chicken (See the Chicken Crispie recipe in the Let's Go Cookbook to try when chicken is on your menu). And oven baked potatoes are better for us than French fries.

Next time:

- Try to use the phrase, “once-in-a-while” foods when talking about other fried vs. baked foods, such as chicken nuggets (fried) vs. baked chicken strips.
- Try to serve low fat products in your program menus.



Balloon Bellies

Tip: Encouraging children to respond to their own hunger signals is important for teaching them to eat when they are hungry and stop when they are full. This activity can be incorporated every day, if desired.

Get ready:

- 1 foil balloon (Note: Do not use latex balloons which pose a choking and allergy risk)

Get going:

1. Before children wash up for a snack or lunch, gather them to sit down in a circle.
2. Ask them to describe how their stomachs feel. For example say, "Is your stomach growling? Does it feel empty and hungry or does it feel full?"
3. Show the children an empty balloon. Ask them if the balloon looks "hungry or full?"
4. Now blow some air into the balloon, making it partially full of air to represent "just right." Ask the children how the balloon looks now: hungry and empty? Too full? Or Just right? Talk about how their stomachs feel when they are "just right."
5. Now blow the balloon to its full capacity of air to represent "too full". Talk about how it feels when you have eaten too much and your stomach is too full.
6. Tell children that their stomachs are a little bit like the balloon. When it is empty it sends signs that say "I'm hungry!" and sometimes we can hear our stomachs growling. When our stomachs are "just right," we feel comfortable and ready to play and rest. When our stomachs are "too full" our stomachs might hurt or feel uncomfortable.
7. Remind children that it is important to think about how our stomachs are feeling, so we know when it is time to eat, and when it is time to stop eating!
8. After the snack or lunch, ask children how their stomachs are feeling.

Next Time:

- Use a funnel to fill the balloon with water instead of air. Have children feel the water filled balloon – like their stomachs!
- Provide drawing paper and crayons. Ask children to draw pictures of a person: one whose stomach is hungry, one whose stomach feels just right, and one that shows a person whose stomach is too full!



Body Building

Tip: Protein is often just associated with muscles; however, protein is an essential nutrient that also helps build other tissues and organs, even hair. Help children think of the foods they eat and identify the foods that come from the meat/beans food group.

Get ready:

- Large piece of butcher paper, enough to be as tall as one child
- Crayons for tracing
- Food group picture cards of meat/bean food group foods
- Scotch tape

Get going:

1. Guide a child to lay on the butcher paper and ask the others to help trace around the body with crayons.
2. Tape the body tracing up on a wall where everyone can reach.
3. Spread meat/bean food group pictures* on the floor near the tracing.
4. Have children work together to tape the food pictures “within” the body, representing how every part of our body benefits from healthy protein choices.
5. Make sure there is a good assortment of meat/bean foods, some that would be considered healthy choices and some others that aren't as healthy (fried foods, pepperoni, etc.) to encourage children to look at the foods carefully and make healthy choices for the body.

Next time:

- Try this with a different food group, focusing on what that food group provides for our body.
- Provide pictures of foods from all the food groups and “junk foods” such as cake, cookies, candy, and potato chips. Ask children which groups are healthy and should be placed inside the body and which are less healthy and should remain outside the body.



Bread – Bread – Bread....Taste test

Tip: For best health, dietitians recommend that half of the grains we consume should be whole grains. Use this activity to talk about the importance of eating whole grains and see if children can find a favorite during the taste test. If we find a type of whole grain we enjoy, we'll be more likely to eat it!

Get ready:

- The book, “Bread, Bread, Bread” by Ann Morris and Ken Heyman (from your library)
- Several different whole grain breads to sample, such as: 100% whole wheat bread, whole wheat white bread (new to some markets), pumpernickel bread, cornbread
- Crayons and white paper

Get going:

1. Read the book, “Bread, Bread, Bread” which explains how bread is eaten all over the world.
2. Invite children to taste whole grain breads. Tell them that whole grain breads are good for our bodies and brains because they have lots of nutrients and fiber. Name the different breads you are offering for the taste test. Encourage children to taste the different breads and describe the flavors.
3. Now invite children to draw a picture of a meal that includes that bread (i.e. a sandwich or toast in the morning, etc.)

Next time:

- Try making French toast using various whole grain breads. (Find a recipe on the web.)



Busy Banana Pops

Tip: Fruit is a great alternative to sweet treats. Find ways to make the fruit you serve fun to eat!

Get ready:

- Enough bananas for each child to have one half
- Popsicle sticks (one per banana pop)
- 4-5 sheets of low-fat graham crackers, cinnamon or regular
- 12 oz low-fat fruity yogurt
- Cookie sheet
- Wax paper
- Two plates
- 1-gallon zip-locking style bag
- Rolling pin or a wooden spoon

Get going:

1. Prepare the activity area: clean the table surface and line the cookie sheet with wax paper. Spoon the yogurt out onto one of the plates and place the graham crackers in a large zip-locking style plastic bag.
2. Guide the children to wash their hands for the Busy Banana Pops activity. While they wash, talk with them about their favorite fruits and the important vitamins that fruits give our bodies. For example, "Bananas give us a mineral called potassium, that helps us to grow and be healthy."
3. Tell the children that they will be making banana popsicles to freeze and have as a healthy snack a little later.
4. Guide the children to take turns rolling the graham crackers inside the baggie with a rolling pin, or tapping the bag with a wooden spoon, to make cracker crumbs. Pour the crumbs onto a plate.
5. Give each child a banana half. Show them how to push the popsicle stick into the flat, cut end of the banana. Provide help as needed.
6. Now guide the children to roll their banana on a stick in the yogurt, covering all sides. Then roll the yogurt covered banana in the cracker crumbs.
7. Have each child place their banana pop on the wax paper-lined cookie sheet for freezing. Label each child's pop – so children only eat the banana pop they have made.
8. Freeze for 2-3 hours. The enjoy for snack!

Next Time:

- Try this activity (without freezing) using another fruit (peach, apple or pear slice). Provide small portions of yogurt and crumbs on each child's plate, and encourage the children to dip and eat their fruit yogo-crumble snack.



Chew, Chew

Tip: Sometimes meal and snack times can feel busy and hurried, which may encourage children to eat quickly and not pay attention to their stomach cues of hunger and fullness. This activity encourages children to take time to chew their food so their brain has time to signal to the stomach that it is full.

Get ready:

- No extra materials are needed.

Get going:

1. During snack or lunchtime, eat beside children and talk about chewing. Ask children to describe what is happening when they chew their food (teeth crush the food, saliva joins in, and the food is transformed into a product that children can swallow and digest).
2. Ask children to think about their mouths and what it feels like to chew the different foods you have at the table. Soft foods (like tofu, cheese, some soups) may take less chewing. Crispy foods (like apples) or firm foods (like meat or toast) may take more chewing before swallowing. Ask the children to count how many times they chew each of the different foods you are serving.
3. Tell the children that you are going to take a “chew, chew challenge.” This is to remind them to take enough time to chew their food so that their brains can send a signal to their stomachs when they are “just right” full.
4. Challenge children to slow down how fast they chew their food and chew more times before they swallow. Ask them to chew slowly while you count to 10 before swallowing (or to twenty or three times). Ask how it felt to chew slower. For example, “Were you able to taste your food more when you were chewing slower?”
5. Talk about how our brains need some time to get the “I’m full” signal. If we eat too fast it might not get the “I’m full” signal until the stomach is “too full.”
6. Talk about taking time to “chew, chew” their food at other snack and mealtimes to help them know when they are full.

Next Time:

- Explore your library for books about digestion. Look for messages that talk about the importance of chewing food well, to avoid choking, to help the food be ready to digest, and to provide time for our brains to signal our stomachs when we are full.



Chicken Crispies

Tip: Chicken nuggets are a familiar food for many children. They are convenient for families and taste good, but many people are not aware that even though you may “bake” this frozen food at home, it is pre-fried, making it a high-fat meat choice. Try this activity to introduce and encourage children to enjoy this baked crispy chicken recipe.

Get ready:

- Crispy Chicken Recipe (See the Let's Go Cookbook)
- Recipe ingredients
- Large zip-lock style baggies
- Rolling pins (for crushing corn flakes) (Use cans of food to crush flakes if you don't have enough rolling pins)
- Mixing bowl, baking sheet and cooking spray

Get going:

1. Direct children to wash their hands and gather at the table.
2. Place 1 cup of corn flakes in a zip-style plastic bag. Provide one bag for each child.
3. Demonstrate the rolling movement needed to crush the flakes.
4. Invite children to begin “crushing” flakes by rolling with a rolling pin or can.
5. Have chicken breasts and yogurt ready for dipping.
6. When the corn flakes are crushed, ask children to watch you as you do the next step. The adult should dip the chicken strips in yogurt and place 2-3 strips inside each of the bags. Make sure children do not touch the raw chicken. Wash your hands, then zip the bags closed.
7. Guide children to carefully shake the bags until the chicken strips are coated with flakes.
8. When this is completed, have children watch as the adult places the chicken on baking sheets. Bake according to the recipe directions.
9. Have children wash their hands and return to play while the chicken bakes.
10. Eat the chicken at lunchtime. Talk about the process of crushing the flakes and coating the chicken. Talk about how it is important to wash before cooking and also after being around raw meat. Encourage children to taste the chicken strips. Talk about how they now know how to make healthy and low-fat chicken “nuggets.” Share this recipe with families.

Next time:

- Try this activity to bread and bake fish.



Chop Stick Food Groups

Tip: Using an interesting eating utensil, such as chop sticks makes the experiment of tasting and trying new foods a interesting adventure. This activity matches the flavors of stir-fry vegetables with the fine motor skills needed for manipulating chop sticks!

Get ready:

- Chop sticks, a pair for each child
- Plates, spoons, forks
- Stir-Fry Vegetable Recipe (see the Let's Go Cookbook)

Get going:

1. Plan to serve and prepare the Stir-Fry Vegetable Recipe for lunch (see the Let's Go Cookbook).
2. Invite children to sit down at the meal. Tell them that today they are going to have a chance to try eating with chop sticks, the way some families do in other countries.
3. Invite children to serve themselves some of the Stir-Fry Vegetables.
4. Ask them to look at the stir-fry and try identify the different foods they see. Ask them to name the foods from each food group: Grains? (Rice) Vegetables? (bell peppers, broccoli, etc.), Fruit? (pineapple) Meat or Beans? (this is a vegetarian recipe, ,so there is no meat or beans). Are there any foods from the milk group? (milk that is served to drink).
5. Show children how to hold chop sticks and try to pick up a pineapple chunk or other piece of food.
6. Offer spoons and forks for back up!
7. Remind children that eating foods from each of the five food groups is important to help their bodies grow and keep healthy.

Next Time:

- Try making identification of foods from the different food groups a common activity at other snack and meal times.
- To build fine motor skills, offer chop sticks at other mealtimes. Provide chop sticks in a sorting activity, such as sorting colored yarn pom-poms, or to place packaging "peanuts" in a line.



Corn Crazy

Tip: Corn is a vegetable that can be eaten fresh, frozen or canned. Dried corn is a whole grain that when ground can be used to make foods like tortillas, corn chips, corn bread, or polenta.

Get ready:

- Popcorn kernels
- Cornmeal
- Construction or drawing paper (If you want, cut the paper ahead of time in the shape of an ear of corn!)
- Glue or glue sticks

Get going:

1. Gather children and talk briefly about the many foods we eat that are made from corn. Show the children the popcorn kernels and explain that the popcorn kernels are the dried pieces from an ear of pop-corn. Invite children to touch the popcorn kernels. Tell the children that when the corn kernels are dried they can be ground into corn meal -- show a small portion of the corn meal and allow children to touch the meal. Explain that the ground corn, corn meal, is used for making other foods, like corn tortillas, corn chips and corn bread. If it's summer and fresh corn is available show them what an ear of corn looks like. Let them peel back the husks and corn silk.
2. Invite children to make a corn kernel picture by making glue designs on the paper and sticking on popcorn kernels and sprinkling on some corn meal. Set aside to dry.
3. Offer a corn based food for snack or lunch. Choose an appropriate food for the age group to avoid a choking hazard, such as fresh corn on the cob polenta, corn tortillas, baked corn chips with salsa or corn bread. (See *Let's Go Cook!* for a Mexican cornbread recipe).

Next time:

- Make cornbread together.



Different Dairies – a “Hidden” Taste Test

Source: adapted from *Health in Action* (Sorte & Daeschel, 2007)

Tip: Sometimes we have the mindset that low-fat foods, such as low fat milk, just won't taste as good as the full fat food. Blind taste tests are a great way to explore different versions of the same food. This activity is a great way to discover that lower fat milk can taste really good!

Get ready:

- Cold milk to sample such as: whole milk, reduced fat (2%) and either low-fat (1%) or non-fat (skim) milk
- Cups, enough for each child to have one cup for each milk being tasted
- Materials to chart children's descriptions: Drawing paper and pen, pencil or crayon

Get going:

1. Prepare for the “hidden” taste test. Label the cups for each child: A (for Whole milk), B (reduced fat/2% milk), and C (for either low-fat /1% milk or non-fat/skim milk). Make sure there are enough cups for each child to taste each type of milk.
2. Now pour small amounts of each milk type into the appropriate cup.
3. Invite the children to taste each type of milk. Ask them to describe the taste of the milk in each cup. Write the descriptions beside the appropriate letter on the chart.
4. Ask children to tell which milk (“letter”) they like best. Place check marks beside the appropriate letter (milk). Talk about the milk that was voted “most liked.”
5. Tell children that drinking the lower fat milk is especially good for growing and being healthy because it gives us lots of vitamins and minerals, but not the extra fat that we don't need. Tell children that lower fat milk helps keep our hearts healthy and helps build strong bones and teeth!

Next time:

- Try doing hidden taste tests of soy or goat's milk.



Dried Apple People Pictures

Tip: Every living thing needs water to survive! As you help children with this activity, talk about how water helps our bodies to grow healthy. Remind them that when you are thirsty, water is wonderful!

Get ready:

- Apples
- Tray covered with paper towels
- Construction paper
- Glue
- Fabric, popsicle sticks, and other collage materials
- Crayons, marking pens

Get going:

1. Part one: Invite children to come watch while you cut crosswise across the apples making circular slices about 1/4 inch thick. Have the children help place the slices on a tray. Talk about how the apples look (juicy, shiny, bright)
2. Place the tray in the oven on low heat (or in a food dryer) and let the apple slices dry – until they are leathery looking and ready to use in part two.
3. Part two: Set out the tray of the dried apple slices, paper, glue, collage materials, crayons and marking pens. Invite children to come inspect the dried apple circles (remind them they are not for eating). Talk about how the apples look (shrunken, dried out, etc.). Ask for their ideas about why the apples look different (the water has dried away). Remind children that all living things need water, and that people should drink water everyday.
4. Invite the children to make dried apple people pictures. Encourage them to glue the dried apple circle onto the paper, and use it as the head or body of their person Show them the other materials to use to add body parts. Try marking the apples with the marking pens to make facial features if desired.
5. Place the pictures to the side to dry.
6. Offer each child a cup of water when they are done. Talk about how good water tastes and how drinking it helps you feel better and have more energy to play than when you are thirsty. Offer some fresh sliced apples and dried apples (from the store) for children to taste.

Next time:

- Go on a scavenger hunt for leaves, grasses and twigs to use as the body parts for your dried apple people pictures.



Eat at the Rainbow Deli – Dramatic Play

Tip: Eating foods from all colors of the rainbow is a good way to be sure that children get a variety of vitamins and minerals. Help communicate this message to children using the Rainbow Deli theme. Ask your families to help you assemble a group of photos, pictures or empty containers of foods of many colors to add to the variety of your Rainbow Deli props.

Get ready:

- Space in the indoor or outdoor setting to set up your deli.
- Table for a kitchen, shelf, bench or box set on its sides for a counter.
- Deli prop ideas:
 - Plastic food models or pictures of foods (laminated or covered with clear contact paper). Include all food groups and foods of a rainbow of colors: fruits and vegetables (apples, berries, citrus fruits, melons, peaches, plums, nectarines, carrots, celery, pepper, zucchini, summer squash sticks, cucumber slices, salads, broccoli and cauliflower pieces), whole grain breads and rolls, sandwich items such as sliced meats, poultry and cheese.
 - Empty boxes and containers for foods such as: jars of peanut butter, containers of milk and juice, containers from low fat cream cheese or cottage cheese, cans of tuna and salmon (no sharp edged cans), mayonnaise, mustard and ketchup containers, soups, canned fruits and vegetables, boxes of whole grain crackers or rye crisp breads.
 - Baskets, bowls, cloth napkins (in rainbow colors if possible)
 - Blanket, towel or cloth in rainbow colors to set on the floor for eating area
 - “Cash box” (a shoe box) or toy cash register and pretend money
- General supplies: crayons, markers and paper for menu and signs

Get going:

1. Invite the children to help you set up the deli. Arrange the kitchen, order and checkout area, and eating area. Invite children to draw or paint pictures of rainbows or pictures of colorful foods to decorate the space.
2. Show children the props, and suggest that they encourage their customers to eat foods from all colors of the rainbow, especially fruits and vegetables. Encourage the play theme and let children develop their pretend play. Help children take turns being the cook and the customer.
3. At lunch time, try to offer real foods for each color of the rainbow (red apple slice, purple grape (cut up) or plum, blueberry, green bell pepper slice, yellow summer squash, pear tomato or banana slice, orange carrot stick).

Next time:

- Add dress-up clothes in rainbow colors for shoppers; tie a rainbow scarf around the head of the cook. Play the music and dance to, “Somewhere over the Rainbow!”
- Paint a rainbow fruit or vegetable on children’s faces using face paints.



Farmers Market – Dramatic Play

Tip: This activity helps focus play on healthy fruits and vegetables. Consider setting up this dramatic play theme for at least a week so the play can evolve as children invent new ideas. ***Note:** Ask your families to save pictures or bring photos of fresh fruits and vegetables to use in the play. Watch for food models at thrift stores and yard sales.

Get ready:

- Space in the indoor or outdoor setting to set up your Farmers Market.
- Shelf or boxes set on their sides for shelves, small tables or benches for the displays and the check-out counter
- Farmers Market prop ideas:
 - Plastic food models of fruits and vegetables, or pictures of foods (lamineate or cover with clear contact paper so you can use the pictures again and again)
 - Empty berry boxes, shoe boxes or baskets to arrange the displays, bright fabric to cover the display tables or to clip to a clothes line or shrub branches to make an “awning,” or a large bright umbrella to make an awning (tip the umbrella on its side and place the market display on the ground).
 - Dress-up clothes like aprons and hats for the farmers, sun hats and shopping bags for the shoppers.
- “Cash box” (a shoe box) and “money” -- use toy/pretend money – or make paper “bills” from lightweight construction or drawing paper. For coins use plastic milk jug container lids or circles cut from paperboard.
- General supplies to support play: markers and paper for signs; wheelbarrow or cart for the display.

Get going:

1. Invite the children to help you set up the Farmers Market. Show them the props, and help them arrange the display.
2. Encourage the play theme. For example, suggest that a child go to buy food for a pretend picnic, or suggest the children use stuffed animals or dolls as the “shoppers,” or use wagons or wheelbarrows to deliver foods to the store from pretend farms.
3. At lunch time, eat fruits and vegetables and talk about the Farmers Market play.
4. Add or exchange a few new props each day to add interest. Control the number of props to make clean up easy.

Next time:

- Set up several Farmers Market booths. Invite children to help make signs and draw pictures of more fruits and vegetables to sell. Go on a field trip to visit a Farmers Market in your area. Bring home a fresh fruit or vegetable to taste.
- Get active. Hide 6 red and 6 white potatoes. Divide children into red and white teams. Have children run to find the potatoes.



Fast Fruit, Slow Fruit

Tip: Fiber is an important indigestible carbohydrate that helps keep our intestines healthy, lowers our risk for certain diseases and keeps us feeling fuller longer. It is easy to add fiber into our daily eating. This activity helps you show children the difference between foods with fiber and similar foods that do not have fiber.

Get ready:

- 2 funnels
- 2 transparent pint glasses
- 1 cup apple juice
- 1 cup apple sauce

Get going:

1. Begin by asking if the children eat fruits at home. Ask if they drink juice at home. Ask which food makes them feel fuller, fruit or juice. Tell children that whole fresh fruit contains fiber that usually helps us feel full longer.
2. Try this experiment. Place a funnel over each glass. Ask two children to help you. When you say Go! Ask one to pour the apple juice in the first funnel and the other to pour the apple sauce into the second funnel. Watch and talk about which food moves more quickly through the funnel, the apple juice or the apple sauce.
3. Talk about why the apple juice moves through more quickly (because it does not contain as much fiber).
4. Tell children that whole fresh apples have even more fiber because they have skin.
5. Finish by summarizing that fruit makes you feel fuller for longer periods of time compared to juice.
6. Offer applesauce or fresh apples for snacks.

Next time:

- Sample grapes and grape juice, and talk about which food contains more fiber for your good health and to help you feel full longer.



Feed Me Zoo (But Stop When I'm Full)

Tip: It's important for children to learn to recognize when they are hungry, when they are thirsty, and when they are full. This game helps children practice learning these concepts.

Get ready:

- A variety of stuffed animals (one for each child)
- Picture cards of healthy foods, glasses of water, and stop signs -- Use pictures of food or make healthy food cards by copying food clip art onto paper and cutting into card sized pieces, or gluing photos, magazine pictures, clip art, or stickers onto 3" x 5" cards. Try to have 40 total food cards that show a variety of healthy foods; it is ok to repeat the food pictures; aim for 15 water cards, and 20 stop cards.

Get going:

1. Gather the children to play the game. Invite each child to choose a stuffed animal.
2. Show the cards, and help children notice there are food cards, water cards, and stop cards. Tell them the food cards mean the animal is hungry, the water cards mean the animal is thirsty, and the stop card means the animal is full.
3. Mix up the cards and place them in a pile face down. Have the first player turn over a card and place it in front of them. Have that child identify what is shown on the card (food, water, stop) and say, "Hungry" (food card), "Thirsty" (water card), or "Full" (stop sign) depending on the picture on the card. The child should help their zoo animal act out eating (if "Hungry") or drinking (if "Thirsty") or say, "I'm full thank you," if the card is a stop sign. Keep playing around the circle until all the cards have been viewed.
4. Talk about the game at the next meal. As children sit down to eat, ask them which feeling they have: hungry, thirsty, or full (or hungry AND thirsty!). Ask again at the end of the meal. Remind children it is important to understand how their body is feeling so they know when to eat and when to stop eating.

Next time:

- Revise the rules of the game. If a child picks a hungry or thirsty card, have them continue drawing cards until they get to a "Stop" card. When all cards have been drawn, count how many cards each child has.



Fiber Inspectors

Tip: Fiber is an important indigestible carbohydrate that helps keep our intestines healthy, lowers our risk for certain diseases and keeps us feeling fuller longer. It is easy to add fiber into our daily eating. This activity helps you show children the difference between foods with fiber and similar foods that do not have fiber.

Get ready:

- 3-4 examples of edible skin and seed fruits such as, apples, berries, kiwi, or pears, cut into pieces
- 1-2 magnifying glasses (enough to share or have one for each child)
- Plates and forks

Get going:

1. Slice a variety of skin and seed fruits. Place some of each fruit on plates for children to inspect. Place the remaining portions in small serving bowls with spoons.
2. Place the inspection fruit plates on a table. Set the magnifying glasses nearby.
3. Gather children together.
4. Talk about the fruits that have edible skins and seeds. See how many children can name. Tell the children that the skin and seeds of these fruits help our bodies to be healthy because they give us vitamins, minerals and fiber.
5. Invite the children to walk around the table with magnifying glasses and to inspect and examine the fruit. Encourage them to describe what they see.
6. Remind children that eating these fruits with edible skins and seeds is important for keeping the body healthy.
7. Ask children to wash their hands and come to the Fiber Inspectors Snack. Offer samples of each fruit.

Next time:

- Try this activity with vegetables.



Food Group High Five

Tip: Children enjoy and learn from repeating messages in a variety of ways. This activity uses the familiar hand-print designs to reinforce the ideas of the five food groups and eating a variety of foods.

Get ready:

- MyPyramid Poster - copy from the internet at http://www.mypyramid.gov/tips_resources/printmaterials.html
- Drawing paper
- Pencils or markers
- Crayons, small food pictures (printed from the internet or cut from magazines) or stickers showing foods from the 5 food groups, etc.

Get going:

1. Show children the MyPyramid Poster or pictures of foods from the 5 food groups: grains, vegetables, fruits, milk, and meats & beans. Help children name foods from each food group.
2. Tell children they will be making a “High Five” picture showing foods from each food group.
3. Provide paper and pencil or marking pen for each child. Guide them to place one hand down on the paper and help them trace around the hands to create their “food group high five.”
4. Now decorate their High Five picture with food pictures, stickers, or by making food drawings. Assign each finger one of the food groups. For example, Grain foods can be drawn in the thumb. Vegetables can be drawn in the index finger, and so on – each finger to represent one of the five food groups.
5. Label the drawings: Food Group High Five!
6. Encourage children to post their High Five near the snack and lunch table. Each meal, ask the children to look at their High Five, and name the food from the snack or meal that is a member of each food group.

Next Time:

- At another meal or at group time, have children “count” on their fingers, naming the five food groups.
- Encourage parents or family members to let their child draw around their hands and write or draw in foods from each food group to make a family Food Group High Five!



Fried Frenzy

Tip: Many people may not know that there are tasty versions of packaged, frozen foods. Some may worry that low fat foods will not taste good. Use this activity to encourage children to sample the good flavor of low-fat frozen fish or chicken.

Get ready:

- 1 package of regular pre-fried, frozen fish or chicken (like fish sticks or chicken nuggets)
- 1 package of low-fat frozen fish or chicken
- Plates and utensils (if needed)
- Napkins

Get going:

1. Bake both versions of frozen fish or chicken – enough for lunch servings or small amounts for tasting.
2. Cut each into bite sized pieces. Place the “regular” food on one plate and the low fat product on another. Do not tell the children which is which
3. Invite the children to taste the food on the first plate. Ask them to tell how the food tastes and smells.
4. Now ask the children to all taste the other version of the food (regular or low-fat). Ask them to tell how the food tastes and smells
5. Ask if the children can taste any difference. Encourage them to taste again if there are bites still available. Talk about how taste buds are in the mouth and are used to help us recognize the taste of foods. Talk about how the low-fat food helps children to grow healthy and strong bodies. Use words like, “These low fat fish sticks taste very good to me.”

Next time:

- Explore the high-fat and low-fat versions of a different frozen food.



Fruit Juice Fun

Source: adapted from *Health in Action* (Sorte & Daeschel, 2010)

Tip: Making your own fruit juice is fun and allows you to benefit from the fiber if the pulp is included. Talk with children about how drinking some juice each day is OK but eating fresh fruit is more healthy because it has fiber which helps you to feel full.

Get ready:

- Oranges - cleaned and cut in half (enough for each child to have 2-4 halves)
- Individual cups for “juicing” into
- Hand held juice squeezer

Get going:

1. Begin by talking about the different kinds of fruit juice children typically drink. Ask children how they think the juice gets into the bottle or container. Tell them that many bottled juices drinks have ingredients like sugar, added to make them taste sweeter. Tell them that many juices don't have much fiber left in them (briefly explain what fiber is).
2. Let each child take a turn using the juice squeezer to get the liquid to fall into their cup. Provide assistance if necessary.
3. After each child has made their orange juice, talk about how many oranges they think it might take to make a whole glass of juice, or a whole bottle of juice.
4. Tell children why it is important to eat whole fruits (vitamins, high fiber, and no added sugar). Show children an orange half after the juice is squeezed out and show them fiber that is left behind. Tell them oranges are called a citrus fruit and that they have lots of Vitamin C, which helps our bodies stay healthy.
5. After tasting the juice have children sit in a circle. Play the “Duck-duck-Goose!” game, but this time say, “Orange, orange, orange – Lemon!” have one child walk around the outside of the circle saying the chant and tapping the shoulder of each child. When the child says, Lemon! The child they tap should jump up and chase the first child back to her space. .

Next time:

- Try different citrus fruits next time such as lemons or grapefruits.



Go Green Smoothie

Tip: Smoothies are an excellent way to include different fruits and vegetables in a snack that is nutritious and appealing to children.

Get ready:

- The book, 'Green Eggs & Ham' by Dr. Seuss
- Blender
- Drinking cups
- 1 cup fresh spinach
- 2 stalks celery, chopped
- 2 bananas
- 1 can crushed pineapple (no sugar added)
- 2 cups milk

Get going:

1. Gather children and read the book, "Green Eggs and Ham" by Dr. Seuss. Ask children to name a green food they have eaten. Tell them that dark green vegetables have a lot of a vitamin called Vitamin A that keeps our eyes and skin healthy. Talk about how it is interesting to taste new foods.
2. Place the blender safely on the table. Be sure the electric cord is not a tripping hazard. Be sure all fresh ingredients are washed.
3. Invite the children to watch as you make a green smoothie. Show the foods that will be added to the smoothie and offer small samples of each food for children to taste. Add the ingredients one by one. Ask the children to help you name each food group as you add the food.
4. When all ingredients have been added to the blender, put the top on and blend into a smooth consistency.
5. Offer small portions in drinking cups and ask children to describe how it tastes. If some children are reluctant, talk about the character in the book who was hesitant too, but when he tried green eggs and ham he liked it! Encourage children to try the smoothie, but do not pressure.

Next time:

- Make the smoothie with different green vegetables. Try a different color theme such as orange, using shredded carrots, peaches and mangos



Good Morning Bakery – Dramatic Play

Tip: Reinforce the importance of eating healthy foods made from a variety of grains in your dramatic play bakery. ***Note:** Ask your families to save empty food boxes and clean containers to add to the variety of your bakery props. Be sure that the majority of the food models are for healthy food choices.

Get ready:

- Space in the indoor or outdoor setting to set up your bakery
- Small table for the baking center; shelf for the baking props, cardboard box for a pretend oven
- Play dough, or thawed/previously frozen whole wheat refrigerator bread dough for children to manipulate (the real dough provides the good yeast smell of bread – but this dough will be just for play).
- Baking props: rolling pins, cookie cutters, popsicle stick “knives,” cookie sheet, muffin tins, small bread pans, metal pie pans, aprons, baker hats, flour to sift onto the table.
- Other prop options: pictures of healthy bread and grain products cut from magazine (lamine or cover with clear contact paper so you can use them again), plastic bread models
- General supplies to support play: markers and paper for signs

Get going:

1. Invite the children to help you set up the bakery. Arrange a cooking area, locate the baking props on the shelf, and set up the “oven.” Post pictures or photographs of healthy baked goods in the space.
2. Encourage the bakery play theme. Take pictures to share with children and families later.
3. Consider baking a loaf of the frozen whole wheat bread dough, so children can smell it baking. Offer slices of bread at snack or lunch time. At snack or lunch, remind children that bread is made from grains, and tell them that eating grains is good for our brains!
4. Discard the bakery play bread dough after play is over.

Next time:

- Have children wash their hands and form individual portions of the bread dough into rolls, or alphabet letter shapes (“Make the shape of the first letter in your name.”) Bake the dough shapes and serve each child’s individual shape to them at lunch.



Good Morning Breakfast

Tip: Breakfast is an important meal for starting the day. The healthy food energy provided at breakfast helps us all to think and play throughout the day. This activity invites children to think about the breakfast menus that help them start a good day.

Get ready:

- White board and white board markers, or drawing paper and markers
- The book, 'Max's Breakfast' by Rosemary Wells

Get going:

1. Gather children to talk about breakfast.
2. Tell children that breakfast is the meal we eat first in the day. Ask them why they think breakfast is important (to provide food energy for thinking and playing all day).
3. Invite them to tell you some of the foods that they usually like to eat for breakfast. Help them name the food group for each food.
4. Now ask the children to help you make some healthy breakfast menus. Draw lines to divide your white board or paper into 4 rectangles. Ask children to tell you a food from breakfast #1. Draw in (and write the name if needed) of the foods the children suggest. Have children check to see if all 5 food groups are represented. Repeat for breakfast #2, #3, and #4.
5. Ask children which of the 4 breakfasts they would like to eat.
6. Read the book, 'Max's Breakfast' by Rosemary Wells. Talk about Max's breakfast. Ask if the children think Max would like to eat one of the breakfasts they have invented.

Next Time:

- Serve one of the breakfast menus for lunch.



Grain Mosaics

Tip: Touching and exploring food products is one way that children become comfortable with new foods. This grains collage invites children to touch and paste a variety of whole grains that are used to make healthy foods.

Get ready:

- A variety of whole grains, or dried foods made from grains (check your cupboards and your sensory table materials), such as “wheat “berries,” oatmeal, corn meal, pop corn, brown or white rice.
- Paper plates
- Glue

Get going:

Option #1:

1. Use a marking pen to mark off pie shaped sections on each paper plate. Make as many sections as you have grain products to glue.
2. Guide children to spread glue over one of the sections, then sprinkle or press the grain over the glue. Continue until all sections are complete.

Option #2:

1. Provide each child a plate and a glue stick or squeeze bottle of glue. Guide the children to make a design with their glue, then press grains into the glue.
2. Encourage the children to continue until they have used each grain.
3. As they work, tell children the name of each grain, and help them identify a food made from that grain.

Next time:

- Have the children spread the glue to form their name, then press in the grain. Remind children that grains are good for their bodies and brains.



Grains – Touch and Explore Play

Tip: A variety of grains can be used in sensory bin play. Moving and pouring the grains helps children become acquainted with different food sources, and offers opportunity to remind children that eating grains is good for healthy bodies and brains!

Get ready:

- Shallow tub. For several children use a large tub such as a rectangular plastic storage container sold for wrapping paper
- Space on the floor to play, or low table or bench
- Dried grain ideas (Find these at bulk food stores, or stores specializing in food quality whole grains). Purchase about 5 – 10 lbs. and store in an airtight container for re-use. Choose grains such as:
 - Whole grain wheat “berries,” Whole wheat flour
 - Oats, barley, brown rice
 - Popcorn, dried corn kernels or corn meal
- Manipulative toy ideas:
 - Plastic or metal spoons, scoops, measuring cups, and containers of various sizes and shapes, strainers or sieves (containers with holes)
 - Toy tractors, farm equipment, trucks or animals

***Note:**

- ✓ *Avoid using grains that contain gluten if you have a child who is celiac or gluten intolerant.*
- ✓ *Be sure to monitor very young children to ensure they do not eat the grains being used for play.*
- ✓ *Health professionals recommend that children wash their hands both before and after playing in water tables and sensory bins. This helps reduce the exchange of germs.*

Get going:

1. Set the tub on the floor or on the table or bench. Fill with the dried grain product – providing about 1 – 2 inches of grain.
2. Invite children to place the equipment in the table. Remind them about safe ways to share and play in the grain exploration table.
3. Encourage their exploration and play. Talk with them about the grain they are touching. Notice the feel, the smell, and talk about how it looks. Name some of the foods that are made with the grain, and remind children that eating grains is good for our bodies and brains!
4. Offer a whole grain food for snack or lunch and talk about touching the grains.

Next time:

- Provide opportunity for the children to explore mixing some of the grains with water.



Growing Carrots

Source: adapted from *Health in Action* (Sorte & Daeschel, 2007)

Tip: Preface the activity by talking about vegetable gardens. Ask if anyone has ever helped plant or knows how to take care of a plant. Get children thinking about the process of plant care so that the activity makes sense.

Get ready:

- The book, 'The Carrot Seed' by Ruth Kraus; get this from your library
- Carrots that have their green tops still attached, enough to have one each
- 2 matching flower pots filled with used coffee grounds (the pots should be big enough to "plant" all of the carrots in one pot)
- A divider or box large enough to hide the flower pots
- A table cloth for the floor that can be easily cleaned if coffee grounds are spilled

Get going:

1. "Plant" the carrots in one of the flower pots so just the green tops are showing.
2. Hide the pot with the "planted" carrots behind the divider or place in the box so that children cannot see them until the book is finished.
3. Place the table cloth on the floor. Place the flower pot without the carrots in front of the divider or box.
4. Gather the children to read the book, 'The Carrot Seed'. When the boy in the story plants the carrot seeds, invite the children to come forward, give them a few carrot seeds to plant in the flower pot. Make sure everyone gets a turn.
5. Read along in the book. When the story talks about watering the seeds, have the children pretend to water too.
6. When the boy gets tired of watching for the carrots to grow, and forgets about them, move the flower pot planted with seeds behind the divider or place it in the box.
7. Continue reading the story. When the boy discovers that the seeds have sprouted reach behind the divider (or into the box) and bring out the flowerpot with the carrots!
8. Invite each child to "harvest" a carrot. Help the children wash and scrub the carrots, then you peel the carrots so children can eat them with the green leaves still on. *Carrots may be too hard or not an appropriate solid food for some of the children. If this is the case, peel and steam the carrots and serve for a meal or snack.

Next time:

- Plant a garden in the yard or in a planter box. Choose radishes and beans and other easy to grow veggies.



Healthy Bodies Need Water – Water Color Pictures

Tip: All living things need water. This activity reminds children that their bodies need water to grow and stay healthy.

Get ready:

- White paper towels
- Paperboard template of a child's body shape (cut a body shape "free-hand" or use a gingerbread boy/girl cookie cutter for a pattern)
- Brown or black marking pen
- Shallow cups of water colored with paint (various colors)
- Plastic eye droppers or small paint brushes

Get going:

1. Give each child a paper towel. Invite the children to place the body shape template on their towel, and draw around the body shape template using the marker.
2. Offer colored water and eye droppers. Invite the children to drop – droplets of water onto the body designs to make a picture.
3. Talk about how the bodies in the pictures are soaking up the water. Tell the children that the water is making happy colors in the pictures. Remind them that their bodies need water everyday to stay strong and grow healthy.
4. Place the healthy body pictures to dry.
5. Offer a cup of water after play to remind children how good cool water tastes!

Next time:

- Have children trace around their hands on the paper towel, then drip paint their hands.
- Draw chalk designs around the children on the sidewalk outside, then paint their shapes with large brushes and water.



Healthy Hydration Experiment

Tip: Water is essential to life. When we don't drink enough water, our bodies start to slow down due to the fact that our muscles are becoming dehydrated and our nutrients aren't being properly carried throughout our body. Without water we start to feel sluggish.

Get ready:

- 1 handful raisins
- 1 wide-based drinking glass or glass bowl
- Paper cups and a pitcher of cold water

Get going:

1. Partially fill a glass or bowl with water and place it on the table.
2. Gather children at the table. Talk about the importance of drinking water and ask how much water the children think they drink everyday.
3. Tell them that their bodies can very quickly become dehydrated, or dried up, if they don't drink enough water.
4. Demonstrate this by showing them dried raisins. Give each child a raisin to look at, but not eat. Invite them to describe what the raisin looks like. Point out the raisins wrinkles.
5. Tell them you are going to do an experiment to show how our bodies get "hydrated" or refreshed and comfortable when we drink water. Ask each child to place their raisin in the bowl of water. Direct the children to watch their raisin and describe any changes they see as the raisin rehydrates or refills with water.
6. Ask children if they have ever been thirsty. Ask them to tell you how it felt. Now ask them how they felt when they finally got a drink.
7. Give each child a drink of water and ask them to describe how they feel when they get a drink of cold water.

Next time:

- Offer raisins and individual glasses of water, and spoons. Ask the children to soak some of their raisins and then lift them out of the water and place them beside the dried raisin. Talk about how the dry and soaked raisins look. Invite children to taste the two styles of raisins.



Hungry Caterpillar & Once-in-a-While Foods

Tip: Children can learn about the qualities of food when caregivers expose them to nutrition concepts using children books, taste tests, and food preparation activities. It's important to be a good role model too!

Get ready:

- The book 'The Very Hungry Caterpillar' by Eric Carle
- Socks or lunch sized paper bags
- Marking pens
- Pictures or models of pretend healthy foods and "once-in-a-while foods" (cake, cookies, cupcakes, ice cream)

Get going:

1. Read the book "The Very Hungry Caterpillar." As you read, point out when the caterpillar eats healthy foods, and when he eats "sometimes foods." Explain that healthy foods give us energy and help us grow, and feel good. "Sometimes foods" can taste good but are not as healthy or nutritious. Help children notice that the caterpillar grows and changes into a beautiful butterfly because he learns to eat more healthy foods.
2. Place the socks or bags, and marking pens on the table. Invite children to use them to make a caterpillar puppet. Use the markers to mark eyes and a mouth on the puppet and add decorations of their choice.
3. Invite children to create a grocery garden for their caterpillar puppets using the pictures or food models. Encourage them to play caterpillar games with their puppets, and remind them, "Sometimes foods are just for sometimes, but healthy food is for always."

Next time:

- Use the recipe in *Let's Go Cook!* to make a banana caterpillar snack. Talk about the healthy foods used in the recipe.
- Help children make a list of sometimes foods and a list of healthy "always" foods.



Ice Shapes and Water– Touch and Explore Play

Tip: Water is an important beverage! This play theme teaches children about properties of water. ***Note:** Ask your families to freeze water in various plastic containers to contribute to this activity.

Get ready:

- Shallow tub, such as a rectangular plastic storage container sold for wrapping paper
- Table or bench
- Ice shapes – freeze water in a variety of plastic containers of different shapes and sizes
- Animal (especially arctic animals) and boat toys
- Water color paints and paint brushes (medium sized)
- Towels to dry hands

Get going:

1. Have children help you tip the ice shapes out of the plastic containers into the tub. Talk about the shapes, what the ice looks like, and how it feels.
2. Encourage children to play with the ice and animal and boat toys.
3. Remind children that ice is frozen water. Talk about how water is important for all living things including animals and people. Ask children to tell you when people should drink water (everyday, when playing and working, when it is hot, etc.) Watch as the ice begins to melt. Talk about why the ice freezes and why it melts.
4. Later, offer the water color paints and brushes. Allow children to paint the ice shapes and enjoy watching the paint, ice, and melting water make an interesting design.
5. Offer ice water for children to drink. Talk about how water is important to keep our bodies healthy.

Next time:

- On a warm day, place the ice shapes outside on a plastic sheet or tarp. Let children play with animal toys, trucks and boats while sitting in the melting ice shapes.



I Saw Helpful Behaviors! Jar

Tip: Teaching and reinforcing the behaviors you desire to see from children goes a long way to directing their energy in positive ways and helping them be happy participants in the group setting. Give encouragement for positive behaviors like following directions or playing appropriately with this activity.

Get ready:

- Drawing paper
- Children's scissors
- Crayons or markers, stickers or stamps

Get going:

1. Gather children and talk about why it is important to follow directions and be safe. For example, "why do we need to pick up toys when we're done with them?" (To keep from tripping on them.) Ask children to give other examples of rules that help them be safe when they play and helpful, such as: no hitting, saying nice words, playing nicely with the toys, (and other ways that children play safely and care for each other in your child care home). Invite children to act out some of these ways that they play safely and are helpful.
2. Now invite children to make "helpful behaviors" name tags. Guide each child to fold a piece of construction paper into 4 sections. Ask them to open the page and decorate each of the 4 sections. Then help them write their name in each of the four sections.
3. Guide them to cut along the fold lines to make 4 tags.
4. After all of the name tags are decorated, show children the jar and explain that the jar will be used to collect their "helpful behaviors" name tags when they are observed following the rules, sharing, using manners, and being helpful.
5. Show them where you will keep their "helpful behaviors" name tags, and demonstrate how you will put a tag in the jar when you observe helpful behaviors.
6. The first day, try to watch for each child demonstrating a helpful behavior. At the end of the day, show the children the tags in the jar.
7. Empty the jar at the end of each day, and begin observing and placing tags in the jar again the next day.

Next Time:

- Make an agreement with the children to collect the tags over a longer period of time, such as across a full week. At the end of the week, let each child individually count how many tags they have in the jar.



Is That My Stomach Growling?

Tip: Child care providers usually schedule snacks and meals for children at steady intervals throughout the day to be sure that they are getting appropriate energy and nutrition. What we don't always think about is asking whether or not the children are hungry. Following our stomach's hunger cues is a good way to learn when to eat, and when to stop eating! It is important to encourage healthy eating habits that allow children to listen to their bodies.

Get ready:

- 3 balloons – one empty, one blown up half way, and one blown up full
Note: Do not use latex balloons which pose a choking and allergy risk.

Get going:

1. Place the three foil balloons at different places on the floor.
2. Just before lunch or snack, have children gather at the center of the room. Talk about how the balloons are like our stomach. When you eat you become full just like the full balloon. When you are hungry, your stomach feels like the empty balloon.
3. Ask the children to jump close to the balloon that is blown up if they feel full; if they are hungry to jump to the balloon that is empty; and if they feel just right to jump to the balloon that is halfway blown up. Before the meal, many children may feel that their stomach is empty. Ask if they ever hear their stomach's "growl" when they are hungry. Explain that these feeling are ways that our bodies tell us when to eat and when we don't need to eat.
4. After lunch or snack, ask children which balloon their stomach feels like now (full?).

Next time: Sing this song to the tune of, *If You're Happy and You Know it Clap Your Hands*.

- 1st verse: If you're hungry and you know it, clap your hands. If you're hungry and you know it clap your hands, If you're hungry and you know it then your tummy will show it (frown face), if you're hungry and you know it clap your hands.
- 2nd verse sing, If you're "full" and you know it stomp your feet" and show a smiling face.
- 3rd verse sing, If you're "too full and you know it rub your tummy" and show a face that looks a little sick.



Making 'Stone Soup'

Source: adapted from *Health in Action* (Sorte & Daeschel, 2007)

Tip: Making soup is a fun and easy way to encourage children to try a variety of foods especially vegetables. Soup is a natural way to mix different flavors.

Get ready:

- Get the book 'Stone Soup' by Ann McGovern from your library
- Soup bowls, spoons, plates
- Stone Soup recipe from the Let's Go Cookbook
- Assemble the ingredients and utensils for the recipe
- Plastic knives, cutting boards

Get going:

1. Read the book, 'Stone Soup.' Talk about the different foods that are put into the soup.
2. Tell everyone that you will be making "Stone Soup" today and you will need their help.
3. Direct the children to wash their hands and gather at a table.
4. Provide cleaned and peeled vegetables. Cut vegetables into appropriate strips that children can cut into chunks for the soup using the plastic knives.
5. Invite children to cut the vegetables and put them into the soup pot.
6. Guide children to pour the soup stock over the vegetables.
7. Follow the recipe, and guide children to help with the age appropriate steps
8. Simmer the soup and serve at lunch.
9. Optional: Invite parents to come eat the Stone Soup lunch.

Next time:

- Think of additional ingredients you can put in your 'Stone Soup' that the younger children can add (i.e. beans, corn, etc.).



Mealtime Poster Frame

Tip: Young children have small stomachs and need to eat more often to be sure that their bodies stay fueled. A daily schedule helps ensure that meals are served in a regular pattern, and helps to keep children fueled for play.

Get ready:

- A poster board (a size that can be displayed where children can see it)
- Paint soaked sponges set in shallow trays
- “Stamp” ideas, such as:
 - Fruits or vegetables for “stamps” (choose foods from your cupboards that will make interesting designs, like peppers, apples or oranges cut crossways, potatoes cut to make an interesting “stamp,” or the base of a head of celery cut crossways – makes a flower design)
 - Or cooking utensils for “stamps” (like a pancake turner, fork, cookie cutter, or base of a cup)
 - Or Stickers (especially with food themes)

Get going:

1. Set the poster board on a table with the paint trays and “stamping” items.
2. Invite children to decorate the mealtime poster. Tell them that the poster will be the frame for the meal schedule. Remind children that you serve meals and snacks at regular times so they can have the food they need to have the energy to play.
3. Offer extra paper in case children want to make kitchen stamp art pictures.
4. When the poster is dry, tape on a page where you have written the mealtime schedule for breakfast, snacks and lunch. If you print out a menu, post it here too.
5. Place the poster on the wall for children and families to see.

Next time:

- Invite families to submit their favorite healthy recipes. Make copies for each family. Have children decorate the cover of the recipe book with kitchen stamp art.



My Billboard Healthy Meal

Tip: Children can be great ambassadors for healthful eating. Encourage your children to “advertise” their good ideas for healthy meals on a billboard!

Get ready:

- Drawing or white construction paper or 18” x 24” poster boards
- Crayons/ or markers
- Magazine pictures, scissors and glue
- MyPyramid poster -- from the web at:
<http://www.mypyramid.gov/downloads/PreschoolerMiniPoster.pdf>
or pictures of foods from the five food groups to provide ideas for drawing
- Optional: photos of each child to print and paste onto their billboard

Get going:

1. Invite children to gather at the activity table.
2. Tell them that today you will be making healthy foods billboards to remind your friends and family to eat healthy. Tell them that a billboard is a very large sign that you might see alongside the road when you are driving. Ask if they have seen a billboard, and what they saw on the sign.
3. Provide the paper and crayons or markers. Encourage them to choose a favorite mealtime (breakfast, lunch, dinner, snack) and draw a picture of their favorite meal. Remind them to make the picture big so people walking by can see their information.
4. As they work, talk with each child about his/her meal. Then help the child, or write for them, a title for their billboard. Help to include a healthful nutrition message. For example, if a child is drawing fruit salad, suggest a title like: “Eat Jane’s Fruit Salad for lots of Vitamin C”, or, “Caden says, Eat a Rainbow of Healthy Foods.”
5. When done, ask each child to show what they put on their billboard and tell why it would be good for others to eat the food they drew.
6. Display their billboard pictures on a wall where parents can see them or on a window facing the street for others to see.

Next Time:

- Take photos of each child holding their billboard. Make a collage of the photos and send them home as a family reminder that kids can help them learn to make healthy food choices.



On Top of Spaghetti

Tip: Spaghetti is a meal that is generally well-liked by all. It's also a great dish to add extra vegetables and leaner meats such as ground turkey, making it more than just pasta with sauce!

Get ready:

- Spaghetti Recipe. See the Let's Go Cookbook!
- Recipe ingredients
- Utensils: wooden spoon, pots for sauce and pasta, cutting boards or plates (for slicing vegetables), plastic knives
- The book, "Cloudy with a Chance of Meatballs" by Judi and Ron Barrett or any other children's book that has a spaghetti theme, such as *Strega Nona* by Tomie de Paola, or *Oodles of Noodles* by Diana Hendry

Get going:

1. Begin to prepare spaghetti as directed.
2. Invite older children to help chop vegetables, such as sliced onions, and bell peppers. Pre-slice vegetables like carrots into strips for easier chopping.
3. Guide younger children to chop mushrooms, add seasonings and break noodles in half.
4. Talk about the different foods included in the recipe and their food groups.
5. While the sauce simmers and spaghetti noodles cook, read "Cloudy with a Chance of Meatballs."
6. Hide some brown rolled up socks in a play room or outside in the play area. Sing a song, such as, "On Top of Spaghetti..." and let the children search out the lost meatballs. Encourage an active search. Is there one that is under a bush?
7. Eat spaghetti and ask children to name the different food groups.

Next time:

- Try adding foods from as many food groups as possible. See if your spaghetti can include foods from all five food groups. Vegetables that can be chopped and added to the sauce include zucchini, summer squash, carrots, red, green and yellow peppers, chopped spinach.



Oranges and Tangerines, Oh My!

Tip: Sometimes children will not like one form of a food but will readily eat another. If a child says they don't like a food, give them a chance to try different types of the same food. Good nutrition comes in many forms; fresh, frozen, canned or dried foods.

Get ready:

- 3 oz. paper cups
- can opener
- paper napkins
- canned mandarins, 1 fresh tangerine or Satsuma mandarins for each child, washed (these are usually easy to peel)
- orange or tangerine juice in a small pitcher
- napkins
- File or mailing label stickers
- Marking pens

Get going:

1. Put small spoonfuls of canned mandarins in cups. For toddlers cut fresh mandarins into small pieces.
2. Ask children to peel their fresh Satsuma mandarins and place on napkins. Have them bend the peel so that the zest squirts out. Talk about how the food smells. Ask if they like the smell. Tell them if you like the smell. Talk about how the way food smells sometimes make you feel hungry!
3. Give the children a cup and help them pour the orange or tangerine juice into their cup.
4. Give each child a cup of the canned mandarins.
5. Ask the children to taste the different foods. Talk about the different flavors and textures. Ask children to vote for the food they like best
6. Talk about how sometimes if you don't like a food one way you might like it better another way.
7. Encourage them to keep trying new foods.

Next time:

- Try a different fruit in various forms, like dried, sauced or frozen.



Picture Perfect Pitas

Tip: Pita pockets are a fun way to make a quick sandwich. Just stuff in the ingredients and go! Tell children that pita pockets are part of the grain food group, and that these foods give us important vitamins, minerals and fiber that help us grow healthy.

Get ready:

- Yellow or brown construction paper
- Plastic or paper plate – 6-8” size
- Children’s scissors
- Glue, glue sticks or tape
- Magazines with food pictures, MyPyramid food photos or food pictures from the web

Get going:

1. Prepare pita designs for the younger children by using the plate as a pattern to draw 6” circles on the construction paper.
2. Show older children how to draw the circles using the plate pattern. (make
3. Provide scissors and encourage the children to cut out their pita bread circles. Offer assistance for younger children as needed.
4. Show the children how to fold the circles in half. Then cut along the folded “line” to make 2 half circles.
5. Ask the children to put glue along the curved edges of one half circle, then lay the other half-circle on top and press firmly. This leaves a “pita pocket” opening along the straight line.
6. Invite children to cut out pictures of foods and put them into their pita pocket. Encourage children to include healthy foods.
7. Invite school aged children to make an extra paper picture perfect pita pocket sandwich for dramatic play. This time, glue the foods into the paper pita.
8. Once everyone has “stuffed” their pita pockets with food, have them show their creations and name the different foods they have stuffed in their pita pockets. Help the children name the food group for each food. Remind them that it is important to eat foods from many food groups.
9. Tell the children they can make real pita pocket sandwiches at home. Find the recipe for Picture Perfect Pita in the Let’s go Cookbook. Send the recipe home for families.
10. Serve pita sandwich makings and encourage children to make a pita sandwich for lunch.

Next time:

- See what other “craft foods” you can make such as pizza or cereal with toppings.



Policy for Healthy Eating

Tip: Writing a policy helps family child care providers communicate their commitment to healthy eating. The Policy is designed to help you describe what you think is important about nutrition. It helps guide you to do activities to match your goals. Your Policy will be unique to your setting, your practices and beliefs, but policies are usually based on some common themes like those listed in the Template (see LGEH Section II). You can use the activity below and the Template to create your own Policy. Then you can communicate your commitment to healthy eating to others.

Get ready:

- Pen and paper, or computer

Get going:

1. Review the Template for Writing a Policy in Section II of this document. Think about what you feel is most important.
2. Place a check in the box beside the items that you want to communicate. Add additional statements that are important to you. Aim high, but also describe your realistic goals for healthy eating and active play.
3. Begin writing your policy statements. Use the statements provided here or adjust them to fit your style and your setting.
4. Read over your policy and make any additions or revisions you want.
5. Show your policy statement to a trusted friend or parent, and ask them for any feedback. Are your statements clear? Are your values and goals easy to understand? Is there anything that seems problematic? Does the person have any ideas to add?
6. Finalize your Policy and print it on a sheet to share with families. (Save your policy on your computer so you can revise it in the future.)
7. Post your Policy where families can see it.

Next time:

- Review your Policy every year. Make changes and add to your statement.
- Share your Policy with families when they enroll their child with you.
- Ask other Family Child Care Providers to share their Policy for Healthy Eating and Active Play. Check theirs for good ideas, and share your Policy with them.



PotAto, PotAHto

Tip: Potatoes are a starchy vegetable. Potatoes are nutrient-rich vegetables when eaten in a “healthy” way – such as boiled, mashed or baked rather than French fried or fried as hash-browns.

Get ready:

- The book, ‘Two Old Potatoes and Me’ by John Coy and Carolyn Fisher
- Potato eyes – enough for one for each child. The “eyes” on a potato are the potato buds or sprouts. They are usually found on older potatoes and look like little nubs on the skin of the potato. Cut out the eye sprout area from a whole potatoes by cutting a wedge around the “eye” into the potato.
- Paper cups, 8 oz size
- Potting soil
- Peelers, for potato cooking portion
- Ball or soft object for “Hot Potato” game and music
- Baking potatoes, for making mashed potatoes
- Cooking pot and potato masher

Get going:

1. Read ‘Two Old Potatoes and Me’. Talk about the story. Ask children how they usually eat potatoes at home: mashed, boiled, baked, fried, and so on.
2. Give each child a cup. Have them write their names on the cup (label the cups for toddlers). Have them set the cup upside down. Provide a push pin to poke some holes in the bottom of their cup for drainage (Assist toddlers, and supervise older children). Gather and put the push pins away.
3. Guide the children to scoop the cup full of potting soil. Have children plant the potato eyes in their cup. Plant some cups for your program garden. Have children wash their hands when they are done planting.
4. Place the cups in a bright location. Help the children care for their potato plants until they sprout. Send the children’s plants home with information about how to transplant the potato in the yard.
5. Plant your program potatoes in a sunny place in the garden. Keep caring for the plants. Read about growing potatoes.

Next time:

- Try this with a different kind of potato, such as sweet potatoes or yams.
- Play “hot potato.” Roll a sock into a ball, and play catch pretending the “potato” is hot.
- Make mashed potatoes from fresh potatoes and serve for lunch. Show the steps for making mashed potatoes.



Pretty Purees!

Tip: Explain to children that pureeing fruit means chopping and making sauce from the fruit. It is another way to eat fruits. Show how pureed fruits can be used in many ways (i.e. pancake toppings, ice cream or yogurt topping, oatmeal/cream of wheat toppings, etc.). Today you will be making colorful designs with your pureed fruit before eating it.

Get ready:

- 1 container low-fat vanilla yogurt
- 1 cup of each, pureed: strawberries, blueberries and peaches
- Craft/popsicle sticks (enough for each child to have one)
- Firm plastic or paper plates, with higher sides
- Spoons for eating

Get going:

1. Puree each of the fruits, keeping colors separate.
2. Put the yogurt in a bowl.
3. Place pureed fruits in separate bowls or put the puree into squeeze bottles – like a clean ketchup bottle, and invite children to squeeze drops of puree onto their plates. This helps children control the amount of puree used.
4. Guide children to serve yogurt onto the high-side plates and spread it to make a thin layer.
5. Guide children to place a dollop or a squeeze of each pureed fruit onto the yogurt.
6. Have children take craft sticks and drag them through the fruit dollops to create colorful swirls on the plate.
7. When finished, look at the colorful plates. Provide spoons and eat!

Next time:

- Try other fruits or berries for different colors (Kiwi? Plums?)
- Steam and puree vegetables of different colors such as pureed carrots, pumpkin, green beans, beets, or tomatoes. Use a veggie purees in recipes such as the Carrot Cookies in *Let's Go Cook*.



Rainbow Tasters

Tip: Vegetables are beautiful to look at and come in many pleasing colors. Talk with children about how tasting colorful vegetables is like tasting the “rainbow,”

Get ready:

- An array of different colored vegetables (red, yellow, orange and green bell peppers, zucchini and summer squash, purple cauliflower or shredded red cabbage, red radishes or tomatoes), a bowl of salad greens such as fresh spinach, green and red leaf lettuce. See *Let's Go Cook* for a tossed salad recipe.
- Knife to cut up the vegetable for tasting.
- Crayons and white paper

Get going:

1. Lay the vegetables like a “rainbow” (red-orange-yellow-green-blue-purple) so children can see the array of colors. Name each vegetable and identify the color.
2. Invite children to draw a picture of the vegetables on their paper, using their crayons. Provide chunky sized crayons for toddler hands. Remember, all pictures are welcome. Some children may scribble, some children may prefer to use just one colored crayon, and others may be able to create vegetable shapes. Offer a steamed vegetable for younger toddlers.
3. Have children wash their hands and sit in a circle or at the table. Provide small samples of each of the vegetables for children to taste. Offer a steamed vegetable for younger toddlers.
4. Ask children to vote for their favorite vegetable.
5. Post the children’s drawings and put up a sign with the vegetable voted the most favorite!
6. Serve a salad and let children add their favorite vegetables.

Next time:

- Try this again, this time making a rainbow of fruits!
- Use this activity to be active. Play tossed salad! Provide colored scarves, socks or tissue paper to toss in the air and catch as they float down.
- Have older children read to the younger children, books such as, *Eating the Alphabet from A to Z* by Lois Ehlert or *I Can Eat a Rainbow* by Annabel Karmel



Salsa to Salsa

Tip: Salsa is a great food to eat with many things. It adds a little spice to food and is rich in vitamins. This week, encourage children to try foods with salsa.

Get ready:

- Salsa recipe in the Let's Go Cookbook
- Tomatoes, corn, beans and salsa "flavorings" dished into small serving bowls
- Serving spoons
- Baked corn chips or whole wheat tortillas cut into pieces
- The book, 'Salsa' by Lillian Colon-Villa
- Small bowls or cups, one for each child
- Spoons and plastic knives, one for each child
- Napkins or plates
- Salsa music CD

Get going:

1. Have children wash their hands and gather at a table.
2. Provide each child with a plate and plastic knife for cutting tomatoes, a small bowl or cup and spoon for mixing their own salsa.
3. Guide children to cut the tomatoes into small pieces and place them in their own bowl.
4. Pass the other salsa recipe ingredients one at a time. Guide children to measure a portion into their cups. Have the children mix their salsa..
5. Offer each child a napkin or plate, and pass the baked corn chips or tortilla pieces. Younger children should be served soft tortilla cut into bite size pieces instead of chips. Have children eat their chips and salsa while you read the 'Salsa' book.
6. Put on some music and dance the salsa!

Next time:

- Try making a fruit salsa next time or use additional vegetables to encourage variety.



Sandwich Shop – Dramatic Play

Tip: Sandwiches are a great way to serve a variety of healthy foods. Your pretend sandwich shop will help children practice making sandwiches using healthy foods. Ask your families to save pictures of appropriate sandwich foods to add to your props..

Get ready:

- Space in the indoor or outdoor setting to set up your sandwich shop.
- Tables – one to prepare sandwiches and one to be the customer's table.
- Sandwich Shop prop ideas:
 - Plastic food models (flat) of sandwich making items – bread slices, meats, cheese, vegetables, lettuces or pictures of foods (laminated or cover with clear contact paper so you can use the pictures again and again) such as: of bread slices, rolls, slices of deli style meats, cheese, tomato, lettuce, pickle, mushroom, apple slices; small plastic condiment containers (empty and clean) to pretend to squeeze on mustard or ketchup, or spreads like humus or peanut butter.
 - Plastic plates and cloth napkins (so you can use them again), table cloth or placemats, pretend or real flowers and vase
 - Paper and markers to make menus or menu posters
 - “Cash box” (a shoe box) or toy cash register and play money -- use toy/pretend money – or make paper “bills” from lightweight construction or drawing paper and plastic milk jug container lids or circles cut from paperboard for coins.
- Apron, hat and plastic gloves for sandwich makers,
- Crayons, markers and paper for menus, order forms, signs

Get going:

1. Invite the children to help you set up the sandwich shop. Show them the props, and suggest they arrange the shop with a kitchen area for making sandwiches, a counter to order and pay, and a table for customers to sit and eat.
2. Demonstrate making a pretend sandwich on a plate, by layering a “piece of bread,” with the sandwich makings and topping with another slice of bread. Encourage the sandwich shop play theme: ordering, selling, making, delivering and cleaning up (putting the sandwich makings back in the “kitchen” area) the sandwiches. At lunch time, consider offering sandwich makings for a make-you-own sandwich. Talk about the healthy foods that are part of a sandwich.
3. Store the props in zip-style bags or large paper envelopes – for next time.

Next time:

- Provide construction paper for children to draw and cut their own sandwich ingredients to add to the play.



Shrinking Violets

Tip: Just as we learned in the Healthy Hydration activity, we need water to survive and so do other living creatures, including plants! This activity will help demonstrate the importance of water everyday.

Get ready:

- 2 flower plants such as African violets, violas or primroses, with saucers
- Tape, and marking pen to label the plants
- Water

Get going:

1. Label one plant (for example), “Viola with water” and one, “Viola with NO water.”
2. Talk about the importance of water for all living things. Ask children to name the living things that need water. Be sure to remind them that plants need water just like people and other animals.
3. Explain to the children that you are going to try an experiment to learn about the importance of water.
4. Show the children the two healthy viola plants. Tell them that they are both going to sit on the window sill (or table near a window). Explain that you and the children will water one of the plants a little bit every day. Tell them that the other plant will not be watered. Show the children the labels on the plants.
5. Place the plants on their saucers on the window sill.
6. Each day look at the plants with the children. Water only the “Viola with water” plant. Watch for wilting on the plant that is not watered.
7. When the plant without water begins to wilt, ask children to describe the appearance of the two plants. Take a picture of the healthy and wilted plants.
8. Now begin to water each plant a little bit every day.
9. Ask the children to watch for a difference. Look at the pictures of the wilted plant. Did the drooping plant “come back” to healthy? This is a sign of the importance of water for growing and being healthy. Remind children that water is important for them too.
10. Offer children a cup of water.

Next time:

- Try this activity by setting a long piece of celery in each of two cups. Put 1” of water in one of the cups but leave the other empty. Watch the celery from day to day. Does the dry one wilt?



Snack Scents

Tip: Sometimes the way a food smells makes a difference with whether children are eager to try it or not. This is a great activity to start encouraging children to talk about how food smells, and to help them pay attention to the different ways food is appetizing.

Get ready:

- Plan a snack that offers a few fruits or vegetables that have distinctive smells, such as: green or red bell pepper , broccoli “tree,” cabbage leaf, onion circle, mango, orange, apple or banana slice, canned (in water) pear or peach.

Get going:

1. Offer the snack items in small serving dishes.
2. Invite children to serve themselves.
3. As children eat the snack, talk about the different smells. See if the children can name or describe the smells. Talk about the smells of foods that children like, and the smells they do not like. Is it the same for everyone?

Next time:

- Try this activity at other meal times, and continue to help children focus on the smells of foods.



Soda Pop – How Much Sugar?

Tip: Food labels provide lots of information about nutrition such as the amounts and percentages of recommended nutrients found in the food or beverage. Health authorities recommend that we choose foods with little or no added sugar. By reading the label it is easy to recognize that soda beverages and other soft drinks are full of sugar. This activity helps show the amount of sugar in a typical soda.

Get ready:

- 1 empty soda can (washed out & dry)
- Funnel with small opening, or paper twisted to make a funnel
- 9 tsp sugar
- 1 piece of black construction paper
- White (or yellow) crayon

Get going:

1. Get ready: Look at the food label on the soda can. Find the section that shows the number of grams of sugar in the beverage. 4 grams of sugar equals a teaspoon in volume. So, to calculate the number of teaspoons of sugar in the beverage, divide the number of grams of sugar by 4. For example, a can with 40 grams of sugar would contain 10 tsp. of sugar ($40 \text{ grams} / 4 = 10 \text{ tsp.}$). Use the funnel to pour the sugar into the empty soda can.
2. Lay the piece of black construction paper on the table – use a white crayon, to make 3 different sized circles on the paper – 1”, 3” and 5” in diameter.
3. Gather the children. Talk about how soda pop tastes sweet because of the sugar in the soda. Tell children that sugar might taste good, but it does not contain any of the vitamins and minerals that they need to grow strong and healthy. Explain that sugar can hurt their teeth and cause cavities. Talk about how drinking soda can also be a problem if children choose soda instead of more nutritious foods and beverages that have lots of vitamins and minerals, like sandwiches, fresh fruit and milk. Tell children that sugary sweet foods and drinks like soda pop are “once-in-a-while foods” – foods that we don’t eat or drink every day.
4. Invite the children to help you explore how much sugar is in the soda. Ask them to predict (guess) how much sugar by having each child point to the circle that represents their guess – a little (1” circle), some (3” circle), or a lot.
5. Now say, “Let’s see what we discover.” Pour the sugar slowly out of the can onto the smallest circle. When that circle is filled, move to the middle-sized circle, and then move to the largest circle. Does the sugar fill all the circles and more?
6. Invite the children to help you make a list of more healthy beverages such as water and milk.

Next time:

- Try calculating and showing the amount of sugar in a candy bar or a cookie.



Soup & Pasta Mix Up

Source: adapted from *Health in Action* (Sorte & Daeschel, 2007)

Tip: Pastas and soups are generally well-liked by children and when prepared with a variety of vegetables they can provide lots of important nutrition too. Serve this important food often.

Get ready:

- Utensils: Cutting boards, large soup pot, mixing bowl, large saucepan, plastic knives
- Soup recipe – see the Let's Go Cookbook
- Ingredients for the recipe, including: a variety of washed vegetables: carrots, potatoes, green beans, corn, sweet potato, onion broccoli, zucchini, squash, turnips; whole wheat pasta of various shapes: shell, twists, tubes, wheels; and canned tomatoes and vegetable broth
- Soup bowls and spoons

Get going:

1. Have children wash their hands and gather at the table.
2. Set out cutting boards, plastic knives, vegetables and the soup pot.
3. Guide children to cut vegetables into bite-sized pieces. Make sure each child has a chance to try cutting each food.
4. Be sure to name each vegetable as you work. Help children describe the colors inside and out.
5. Count the different kinds of vegetables for the soup.
6. Younger children can place the pasta and seasonings into a bowl, and stir them before they are added to the soup pot. Older children can measure the vegetables that will be added to the soup.
7. Place the cut vegetables in the soup pot. Guide children to help pour in the tomatoes and broth.
8. Cook the soup at low heat until the vegetables are soft.
9. Help children measure and scoop different pastas into the mixing bowl. An adult should pour the bowl of pasta into the soup pot. Cook until the pasta is tender (about 10 minutes).
10. Help children measure and mix seasonings together in a dry mixing bowl. (Adults should add these to the soup pot.) Simmer another 5 minutes. Cool slightly.
11. Serve soup and talk about the process of making soup!

Next time:

- Try using brown rice instead of pasta.



Spilt Milk Pictures

Tip: Milk is such an important source of calcium, that physicians suggest that children drink milk every day. This activity provides a chance to talk about how milk is important to grow healthy bones and teeth.

Get ready:

- The story book, "It Looked Like Spilt Milk" (by Charles G. Shaw)
- Blue construction paper
- White paint
- 1" paint brushes

Get going:

1. Set out the construction paper, paint and paint brushes.
2. Gather the children to read the story, "It Looked Like Spilt Milk." Talk about the designs, and remind children that drinking milk is healthy for our bodies to build strong bones and teeth. Ask the children when they drink milk (at lunch, on cereal), and think of foods that are made with milk (yogurt, cottage cheese).
3. Then invite the children to make Spilt Milk Pictures.
4. Guide children to fold a piece of construction paper in half, press the fold, then open the paper again flat.
5. Invite the children to paint a design. Tell them they can pretend they are painting with white paint "milk."
6. When the children have finished painting, invite them (optional) to fold their paper in half again on the previous fold, rub the paper to help the paint inside "print," then open the picture again to see the result.
7. Set the pictures aside to dry.
8. Offer a small cup of cold milk to end the activity.

Next time:

- Have children help you to mix fat free milk and instant vanilla pudding; let set 10 minutes. Provide plastic plates and invite children to finger-paint with the pudding (using clean hands – finger licking is ok!) Remind children that drinking milk and eating foods made from milk are good ways to grow healthy and strong.



Super Chicken Soup

Tip: Winter is a great season to make soup. Make this recipe with your children and have a super chicken soup day.

Get ready:

- Chicken Soup Recipe. See the Let's Go Cookbook!
- Ingredients for recipe
- Kitchen supplies needed: cutting boards, large bowl, plastic knives
- Bowls and spoons
- The book "Chicken Soup with Rice" by Maurice Sendak
- The song, "soup" (from the CD *Supper's on the Table*) by John McCutcheon

Get going:

1. Review the recipe and identify the steps you need to do to get ready, such as simmering the chicken in broth.
2. Place the ingredients children will help with in small bowls on a clean table.
3. Direct the children to wash their hands and gather at the table to make soup.
4. Talk about why soup is a good meal for winter. (It's warm and can be made with lots of different kinds of foods.) Tell them that soup is a nutritious meal. Ask children to identify the food groups used in making the soup. Talk about why lean chicken is a healthy protein sourced (lots of protein but low fat).
5. Invite the children to help make chicken soup. Set out cutting boards and plastic knives. Older children can chop vegetables, such as sliced onions, carrots, and celery. Younger children can chop celery leaves and zucchini.
6. Guide children to add their vegetables to the large bowl. Help younger children add seasonings. If desired, you can substitute 1 cups of rice for noodles in the recipe. Invite older children to measure the rice. **Note:** The adult should add all ingredients to the hot and simmering chicken and broth to avoid burns from splatters.
7. Guide children to help clean up and wash their hands.
8. While the soup is simmering read the book, *Chicken Soup with Rice* by Maurice Sendak.
9. Play the song, *Soup* by John McCutcheon. Sing along and dance.
10. Serve chicken soup for lunch.

Next time:

- Think of fresh foods that are good choices for other seasons: squash, pumpkins and apples for fall, lettuces, asparagus and fresh peas for spring, and berries and beans for summer.



Supermarket – Dramatic Play

Tip: Pretending to buy and sell healthy foods and other household items available in a typical grocery store, helps children try on the roles of shopper and cashier, and learn about making choices and exchanging “money” for food and supplies. Try setting this play theme for a week so children can grow and develop the play. Ask your families to save empty containers for healthy foods to add to your supermarket props.

Get ready:

- Space in the indoor or outdoor setting to set up your supermarket
- Shelf or boxes for shelves, small table for the check-out counter
- Supermarket prop ideas:
 - Plastic food models, or pictures of foods (laminated or cover with clear contact paper so you can use the pictures again and again)
 - Empty boxes and containers such as: cereal, rice mix, yogurt, cottage cheese, juice (be sure packaging is safe; no tin cans with sharp edges)
 - Basic supplies like, empty shampoo or dish detergent bottle, bar soap box, tissue box, a roll of toilet paper enclosed in a plastic baggie
 - Household supplies such as wooden spoons, small broom, sponges
 - Shopping props such as shopping baskets and bags
 - “Cash box” (a shoe box) or toy cash register
 - “Money” -- Use toy/pretend money – or make paper “bills” from lightweight construction or drawing paper marking dollar denominations -- \$1, \$5, \$10, \$20. For coins use plastic milk jug container lids, circles cut from paperboard or paper clips. **SAFETY NOTE:** small items like paper clips and buttons are good pretend coins for older children but should not be used with very young children who might put the small items in their mouths – posing a choking hazard.
- General supplies to support play: markers and paper for signs

Get going:

1. Invite the children to help you set up the supermarket.
2. Show them the props, and suggest they arrange the store according to food groups (dairy foods, fruits and vegetables, grains, meats and proteins) and household supplies (non food products).
3. Encourage the supermarket play theme. For example, suggest that a child go to buy food for lunch to feed to their teddy bear, or ask the children to deliver foods to the store using the toy trucks. At lunch time, talk about the food choices children made.
4. Control the number of props to make clean up easy. Add or exchange a few new props each day to add interest.

Next time:

- Take a field trip to a super market. Focus on the food groups. Purchase several new foods for a taste test



Sweet Potato Prints

Tip: some vegetables are so delicious they don't need any butter or salt. Sweet potatoes are a good example! Introduce sweet potatoes through this activity, then offer mashed sweet potatoes for snack!

Get ready:

- 4 medium-large sweet potatoes or yams – 2 for printing activity and 2 to bake and taste
- Orange paint
- Sponge set on a plate
- Dark green construction paper, drawing or newspaper

Get going:

For the potato prints:

1. Cut 2 potatoes crosswise into 3 chunks each. Leave two chunks in this form. Gently cut a shape at the end of the remaining 4 pieces – such as a square, star, triangle, or free-form design (cut away the edges and gouge out lines or holes for interesting designs, etc.)
2. Spread the paint on the top of a sponge.
3. Invite children to press the potato pieces into the painted sponge, then press it against a piece of paper to make a print.
4. Talk about the smell of the potato, and have children inspect the printed design to see if they can see the texture of the potato and the texture of the design.

For the taste test:

1. Wash, prick and place the 2 remaining potatoes on a paper towel in the microwave. Bake until tender. Let cool briefly. Remove the skin and mash with a fork.
2. Offer spoons and small servings of the mashed sweet potatoes for children to taste.

Next time:

- Cut a sweet potato into sticks and use the sticks for printing. Serve oven baked sweet potato fries at meal or snack. See the recipe in *Let's Go Cook!*



Tasting the Alphabet

Tip: Matching information about food with fun early childhood games is a great way to teach and reinforce a variety of concepts. This activity helps children think about the foods they like and where their first letters help them fit into the alphabet.

Get ready:

- A piece of poster paper
- Marker
- Ruler

Get going:

1. Mark the poster paper with a 2" border around the edges. Put a title at the top of the poster paper, "Tasting the Alphabet." Below the title mark in 26 rows (one for each letter of the alphabet).
2. Gather the children to sit around the poster board. Invite them to say the letters of the alphabet as you write them along the left side of the paper A – Z; one letter for each row.
3. Tell the children that you are going to make a list of the different foods that you eat together, and you are going to match the name of that food with its letter on the Tasting the Alphabet chart. For example, if you serve cherries, you can write 'cherries' next to the 'C' on your chart.
4. Start by remembering and writing in the names of the foods you served at the snack and/or lunch at the child care home on that day. Tell the children that you will add other foods as you eat them!
5. Invite children to write their names and decorate the border area of the Tasting the Alphabet chart.
6. Post the chart near the snack and meal table. At each meal or lunch time, ask the children to name the foods they are eating. Write the food's name beside the appropriate letter of the alphabet (just list each food once; try to add new foods).
7. As time goes on, try identifying a letter that does not yet have a food listed beside it. Ask children for ideas (what will you choose for 'X'?) and plan to serve it a snack or mealtime soon.

Next Time:

- Tell families about your poster. Invite the children to make a poster to use at home.



TomAto, TomAHto

Source: adapted from *Health in Action* (Sorte & Daeschel, 2007)

Tip: Tomatoes are one of those vegetables that can vary dramatically in taste depending on ripeness and type. Encourage children to keep trying tomatoes even if they have said they didn't like them the first time.

Get ready:

- The book, 'I Will Never Not Ever Eat a Tomato' by Lauren Child
- A variety of tomatoes: roma, cherry, grape, small vine, yellow
- Plastic knives
- Cutting boards or plates for cutting
- Small plates for tasting tomatoes
- One or two other tomato products such as ketchup, salsa, tomato soup, or tomato sauce portioned out into tasting cups.

Get going:

1. Read 'I Will Never Not Ever Eat a Tomato'.
2. Talk about the story.
3. Have children wash their hands and gather at a table.
4. Place cutting boards or plates, plastic knives and the various tomatoes on the table.
5. Guide children to cut the tomatoes into bite sized pieces and place a piece of each tomato on their plate.
6. Assist younger children with cutting or have sample cups available with precut portions of tomatoes. Small tomatoes are a choking risk. Toddlers should only be allowed to help cut large tomatoes,
7. Ask the children to sample the different tomatoes. Talk about the flavors. Are the same? Different?
8. Now invite children to taste the other tomato based foods, Ask them what they noticed about the taste of the different types of tomatoes and tomato foods.
9. Ask children to say which tomato or tomato food they liked best.

Next time:

- Try this with a different vegetable that comes in different varieties (like. squash or potatoes)



Tortilla Factory

Tip: Burritos are an excellent way to eat foods from many food groups– and the combinations of foods can be easily adjusted to fit your tastes as you pick and choose what goes inside.

Get ready:

- Whole wheat tortillas (enough for each child to have one or one half)
- 1 can black beans, rinsed
- 1-2 cups shredded low-fat mozzarella cheese
- 1-2 cups mild salsa
- 1 cup carrot, shredded
- 1 small crown of broccoli, cut into small pieces
- Plates for assembling the burritos
- Bowls and spoons for the burrito foods
- The book *Magda's Tortilla* by Becky Chavarria-Chairez or the *Tortilla Factory* by Gary and Rugh Wright Paulsen.

Get going:

1. Gather and prepare ingredients and place them in small bowls with serving spoons. Place the ingredients on the table. Set children's plates around the table.
2. Direct children to wash their hands and gather at the table.
3. Tell children that they will be making their own burrito.
4. Show children how to place a tortilla on their plate. Guide them to put a spoonful of each food on their tortilla. Encourage children to choose a variety of foods. Name the food groups for each food that is on the table. Tell children that although beans are not meat they are in the meat group because they have protein which helps to build strong bodies.
5. Once everyone has filled and rolled their burritos allow children to eat them.
6. After lunch, read "Magda's Tortilla" or "the Tortilla Factory."

Next time:

- Prepare bean and cheese tortillas from *Let's Go Cook!* Serve for lunch.
- Search recipes on the web for breakfast burritos next time.



Trace a Placemat

Tip: Providing snacks and meals at regular times during the day helps to be sure children are getting the food energy they need, and may avoid a tendency to overeat. are an important part of the day. Children gain interest in a variety of foods when they are supported to help “set” the table and prepare for the meal time. This activity can help encourage children’s interest.

Get ready:

- Heavy drawing or construction paper
- Crayons or markers
- 3 each - napkins, forks, plates, knives, spoons and cups one for your example, and others for tracing
- Optional: Clear contact paper, or plan to laminate the placemats

Get going:

1. Invite children to sit down at the table. Tell them that they are going to make a placement to use at the table. Ask if they ever help ‘set the table’ at home. Show an example of how the plates and utensils are usually set out for a meal: napkin on the left, then fork, plate in the middle, knife then spoon on the right, and cup above the knife. Provide an example of utensils set on a piece of paper.
2. Provide each child a piece of paper and some markers. Show them how to place the utensils to match your example.
3. Guide the children to carefully trace around each utensil. Place the cup on its side to make a full cup form, or draw around the circular base.
4. Help the children to draw in a favorite meal on their “plates.” Remind them to try to include a food from each food group if they can. Suggest they decorate the “napkin,” and color in a healthy beverage in the cup.
5. Help each child to write their name on the placemat.
6. Cover with clear contact paper (on each side) or laminate the placemats so you can use them at meal times.

Next Time:

- Provide additional paper so children can make placemats to take home to their families.



Tropical Tornado

Tip: “Tropical” fruits are usually grown in very warm climates. Fruits like pineapple, bananas, mangos, and guavas need lots of warm weather to grow. Tell children that you will be making a “tropical tornado” parfait today. Explain that a parfait is a layered dish of yogurt, fruit and granola.

Get ready:

- 2 bananas, cut into chunks with peels still on
- 1 can pineapple chunks, drained and placed in a bowl with serving spoon
- 1 can mandarins, drained and placed in a bowl with serving spoon
- 24-ounces low-fat yogurt, vanilla or fruit flavored, with a spoon
- 2 cups low-fat granola (choose peanut and nut free granola if any children have nut allergies) Place the granola in a bowl with serving spoon
- Plastic cups for parfaits
- Plastic knives, for banana slicing
- Plates
- Divide the ingredients on the plates, one plate for each child
- (See the Yogurt Parfait recipe in *Let's Go Cook!* for additional ideas)

Get going:

1. Have children wash their hands and sit at a table.
2. Show children the fruits, name the fruits and talk about where they grow.
3. Give each child a banana chunk. Guide the children to peel their banana chunk.
4. Provide a plate and plastic knives for children to cut their bananas into slices. (Older children can help the younger children if needed.)
5. Give each child a plastic cup. Pass the bowls of fruit, yogurt and granola and direct children to place a spoonful of each into their cup to make layers. Pass the fruit, yogurt and granola again to make a second layer.
6. Enjoy for snack!

Next time:

- Have children think of other fruits they would like to try when making a parfait next time.



Uncommon Skins

Tip: Sometimes children will not try foods because of the way a food looks. It may be unfamiliar or it may not look appealing to them. Encourage children to explore foods in as many ways as possible (smell, touch, taste, size, etc.). Ask children to tell something they like about the way the food looks, smells, feels, tastes.

Get ready:

- 3-4 “strange-skinned” fruits (kiwi, pineapple, star fruit, lychee, avocado, or oranges with wrinkled skins).
- Plates
- Cut one of the fruits in half.
- Peel as needed, and cut one of the halves into bite-sized pieces. Place the bites of each fruit on its own plate for tasting.

Get going:

1. Invite children to sit at a table or in a circle.
2. Show them the 3-4 fruit halves. Help children name of each fruit. Tell children the names they don't know.
3. Pass the fruit halves around to be touched, smelled and held, asking the children to talk about the feel and smell of the fruit.
4. Now offer napkins and one fruit at a time, pass the plates of fruit bites to taste. Show the fruit half that goes with each tasting bite. Ask the children to talk about the taste and describe how the food feels in their mouth.
5. Talk about how sometimes food may look unfamiliar or strange and wrinkled, or fuzzy, but that we can't know how they taste until we have tried them!
6. Have children draw the fruit on a file or mailing label “stickers”. Write the name of the fruit on the sticker and have children put the sticker on their shirt to show their family that they are a “taste tester.”

Next time:

- Select a variety of “strange-skinned” vegetables next time.



Veggie & Fruit Peel Exploratorium

Tip: Children enjoy exploring, touching and smelling their food as a way to get acquainted with new products. Here is an activity that makes “playing” with their food an “approved” mini-research experience!

Get ready:

- Shallow tub. For 4 or more children, consider a rectangular plastic storage container sold for wrapping paper
- Space on the floor to play, or low table or bench
- Vegetable and fruit peels. Check the pantry and consider what you might be cooking or preparing for meals today; use what you have on hand. Wash the fruit or vegetable first. Then offer fresh peelings for children to explore, such as peelings from: carrots, potatoes, apples, oranges, bananas, cantaloupe, watermelon, avocado, kiwi.
- Toy animals
- Plastic magnifying glasses

Get going:

1. Set the tub on the floor or on the table or bench. Scatter various vegetable and fruit peelings in the tub. Tell children that these are peelings and they are not for eating but ok for exploring. Provide toy animals and magnifying glasses for children to explore the peelings.
2. Encourage their exploration and play. Talk about the foods they are exploring. Ask questions like: How does the food feel? What does it look like? How does it smell? Does it make any sound? Can you guess what fruit or vegetable the peeling comes from? Tell children that people and animals eat fruits and vegetables to get the vitamins and minerals they need to grow healthy.
3. Guide children to wash their hands when done.
4. Offer one of the foods at the next snack or lunch, and talk about the veggie and fruit peel explorations.

Next time:

- Spread some of the peels in a thin layer and dry in the oven on low heat. When completely dry, provide the peels for a gluing collage. Try to identify the fruit or veggie from each peel. Wash hands when done.



Veggie Sticks

Tip: Many children like to eat vegetables with dip. Instead of ranch or other dressings, you can be creative and make a yogurt-based dip for a healthier alternative..

Get ready:

- Carrots, zucchini, summer squash, jicama and turnip cut into ¼” strips
- Chopped chives or parsley, finely diced cucumber
- Low Fat Ranch Yogurt Dip recipe from the *Let's Go Cook!*
- Ingredients for the recipe presented in small serving bowls with spoons
- Small cup and plate for each child

Get going:

1. Have children wash their hands and gather at a table.
2. Talk with the children about which of the vegetables they have tried before and which are new.
3. Provide each child with a small cups and spoon for mixing yogurt dip.
4. Guide children to place a spoonful of yogurt in their cup. Then have them add small portions of the other ingredients. Allow children to choose not to include the other ingredients if they don't want them.
5. Assist younger children to help stir if needed
6. When each child has mixed a cup of yogurt dip, pass the veggie sticks and encourage children to serve themselves at least one of each vegetable. Make sure the veggies sticks they are eating are “age-appropriate”. You might have to sort out the softer vegetables ahead of time. Younger toddlers will need steamed vegetables.
7. Enjoy sampling the vegetables with the new dip.
8. Talk about how the vegetable sticks taste with the dip.
9. Talk about other “flavors” of healthy dips that the children could make.

Next time:

- Make a yogurt dip for fruits.



Water Balance

Tip: This activity helps to demonstrate how all living things need water to be healthy. Reinforce healthy habits by offering water to drink throughout the day instead soda, sweetened beverages or juice.

Get ready:

- Clear plastic cup or jar (one for each child)
- Water
- Blue food coloring
- Stalks of celery with leaves still attached on top
- Small pitcher

Get going:

1. Tell children that all living things need water to grow and keep our muscles and other body parts healthy. Tell them that when the body or plant has enough water, it is called “hydrated.”
2. Guide the children to fill the cups or jars halfway full of water using the small pitcher.
3. Help them add a couple of drops of the blue food coloring to the water.
4. Give each child one celery stalk. Show them how to stand the stalk in their cup. (Make sure the celery is an appropriate length, so it doesn't tip the cup over.)
5. Place the cups on a table, and invite the children to check their cup and celery across the day, to watch for changes.
6. Observe the stalks at the end of the day and at the beginning of the next day. Watch for the blue color to move into the celery stalk. Explain that this shows that the plant is drinking up the water.
7. Offer a cup of cool water, and talk about how children can get a drink of water if they are thirsty in your child care home.
8. Take a water break at different times during the day.

Next time:

- Try placing droplets of the blue colored water on a dry white paper napkin. Have children watch as the moisture spreads across the napkin. Talk about how the dry napkin is soaking up the water, just like our bodies do when we take a drink.



Water – Touch and Explore Play

Tip: Endless activities can be developed using water and props. These sensory play activities can be very calming, and can engage children in play for long periods of time.

***Note:** Remember that babies and toddlers must be supervised carefully and should only have access to shallow water basins.

Get ready:

- Shallow tub, such as a rectangular plastic storage container sold for wrapping paper
- Space on the floor to play, or low table or bench
- Plastic or metal spoons, scoops, measuring cups, and containers of various sizes and shapes, strainers or sieves (containers with holes), small sponges
- Aprons, towels

Get going:

1. Set the tub on the floor or on the table or bench.
2. Fill with 2-3 inches of room temperature water.
3. Health professionals recommend that children wash their hands both before and after playing in water tables and sensory bins.
4. Invite children to place the equipment in the table. Remind them about safe ways to share and play in the water exploration table.
5. Encourage their exploration and play – pouring and scooping the water. Talk to them about how the water feels (good, warm, soft, nice). Remind them that this is water for playing, but that water is also good for drinking. Tell them that water is important for keeping our bodies healthy and that we should drink water everyday.
6. Monitor the space and wipe up spills to keep the area safe and avoid slips.
7. Control the number of props, and offer a tub to collect the toys when the water play time is over to make clean up easy.
8. Offer a cup of cool water after the play time.

Next time:

- Add sponges cut into different shapes, and plastic eye droppers as play props.



Water Wonders –Exploring

Tip: Heat exhaustion and dehydration are being reported in greater numbers as common reasons children are treated in hospital emergency rooms. Help your children learn about the importance of drinking water as a way to feel good and keep healthy!

Get ready:

- Shallow bowl or tub of water
- Sponges of different shapes and sizes (one for each child) – be sure to air dry the sponge completely
- Piece(s) of newspaper cut to about 12" x 12" (one for each child)
- Permanent marking pen, red crayons and blue crayons

Get going:

1. Invite the children to help you with the Water Wonder experiment.
2. Mark each dried sponge with an identifying number, letter or name (1, M, or Jenna) using the permanent marker. Set the marker away. Have the children look at the sponges and talk about how they look (dry, crinkled).
3. Invite the children to set their dried sponge on their newspaper. Help each child trace a solid line around their sponge using a red crayon.
4. Now, one at a time, help each child dip their sponge into the container of water. Be sure the sponge is completely saturated and swollen with water. Talk about how the sponge is soaking up the water, just like it is getting a drink.
5. Hold the sponge over the water and let the excess water drip out. Then lay the wet sponge over its traced outline. This time, help the child trace around the wet sponge using the blue crayon. Talk about how the sponge looks now (wet, shiny, fluffy). Set the sponges aside.
6. Look at the traced designs. Is the blue design from the wet sponge a bit larger than the red design from the dry sponge? Talk about how the water we drink helps our bodies feel better, and gives us the liquid that we need to grow and be healthy.
7. Write each child's name on their paper. Set the tracings aside to dry.
8. Offer a cup of cool water and talk about how drinking water helps us feel good to play and do things, and how when we are hot and thirsty, we might feel dry and crinkled like the dried sponge.

Next time:

- Try cutting the sponges in body shapes, and using them to make sponge paintings with water color paints. Remind children that drinking water is good!



Water Works – The Water Cycle

Tip: Knowing about the water cycle helps children learn about their world. This activity reminds children that all living things depend on water.

Get ready:

- Small pan or plate with high sides
- 2-3 ice cubes
- The book, *The Snowflake: A Water Cycle* by Neil Waldman

Get going:

1. Gather the children and read the book, *The Snowflake: A Water Cycle*.
2. When you have finished, show the children the ice cubes and the pan. Place the ice cubes on the pan, and put the pan on a table in the sunlight. Explain that the ice cubes are like snow in the mountains. Ask them what they think will happen to the ice cubes as the pan sits in the sunlight.
3. Tell the children that you are going to leave the ice cubes on the tray until the next day. Invite the children to check on the ice cubes at different times during the day.
4. Over time, the ice cubes should melt, and eventually the water should begin to evaporate (faster if the pan is sitting in the sun). Talk about how the ice melts in the warm room, and describe how the water warms until it evaporates into the air.
5. Ask children if they can think of other things that melt.

Next time:

- Offer opportunities for children to water outdoor plants.



What is Quinoa?!

Tip: Quinoa is a grain that may be located in the health food, specialty foods or or bulk food section of the grocery store.

Get ready:

- Zip-locking style plastic baggies
- Quinoa grain
- Dry measuring cups
- Small saucepan
- Water
- Tasting cups, plates and spoons

Get going:

1. Put about $\frac{1}{4}$ cup of quinoa into separate baggies. One for each child.
2. Help children name the grain and practice saying the name: "kee-new-ah."
3. Talk about how quinoa is a grain that help gives our bodies brain power along with energy to play and move.
4. Have the children help measure 1 C. water and 1 C. Quinoa.
5. Simmer the quinoa until tender. Cool slightly.
6. Serve quinoa in plain form, or make the Quinoa Salad Recipe from the Let's Go Cookbook!
7. For safety, be sure to remove the plastic bags and discard when the project is done.

Next time:

- Try cooking different types of grains, rice, barley or bulgur for a taste test.



What Kind of Food Am I?

Tip: Guessing games like these are good choices when you are gathered at group time, having a picnic outdoors, or waiting for families to arrive. Think of some ways you can add to this game for fun guessing and learning about foods and food groups.

Get ready:

- Pictures of different foods from each of the food groups – gather pictures from magazines, take photos, or print from the web

Get going:

1. Gather children to play a guessing game called, What Kind of Food Am I?
2. Select a food picture and hide it in a sack or behind your back.
3. Provide clues, to help guide children's guessing. For example for a banana say, I am a fruit. I am yellow and long. Add more clues if needed: to eat me, you must remove my peel. Monkeys like to eat me. Show the picture of the banana when the correct guess is given.
4. Repeat with other pictures to guide you.
5. Now help a child choose a picture, and guide them to offer clues to the other children for guessing.
6. Add this game to the discussion at snack or lunch, using the foods that are being served.

Next Time:

- Try the game again, this time asking children to ask you "yes" or "no" questions. Guide them to start with the food groups to narrow down the types of foods to guess. See if children can guess the food with only 7 questions.



Whole Grains – Good for My Brain!

Source: adapted from *Health in Action* (Sorte & Daeschel, 2007)

Tip: "Whole" grains are grains that contain all the parts of the grain – the bran (the outside part that provides fiber and B vitamins), the endosperm (the energy part of the grain that provides carbohydrates and some protein) and the germ (the inside part that provides many B vitamins, vitamin E and antioxidants). Whole grains provide lots of nutrients and fiber that may help reduce the risk of heart disease, prevent constipation and help us keep at a healthy weight. Find more information about whole grains at the website: <http://www.wholegrainscouncil.org/>

Get ready:

- The book "The Little Red Hen" by Paul Galdone (from your library or bookstore)
- 2 cups of wheat "berries" or dried corn kernels (enough for children to grind)
- Grain mill (hand operated food grinder often used when canning), blender or food processor
- Magnifying glasses

Get going:

1. Read the book, "The Little Red Hen." Talk about the steps that change the grain to bread. Talk about how grains are ground into flour and used in cooking other foods.
2. Show children the grain you will grind. Invite them to use a magnifying glass to take a closer look.
3. Now grind the wheat berries (or dried corn kernels) into flour. Guide children to help if you have a hand-turned grain mill. You might be able to find a traditional *mano* (rolling pin shaped stone) and *metate* (the stone stand used for grinding corn in central American cultures) to grind corn kernels into corn meal. Or have children watch while you grind the wheat berries in a blender or food processor. Talk about what is happening (the grain is getting ground and cut into smaller and smaller pieces). Invite children to feel the flour made from the ground grains.
4. Choose a grain recipe in *Let's Go Cook!* for making bread such as the Bread in a Bag recipe or Mexican Corn Bread, and bake together.

Next time:

- Provide magazine pictures of different grain foods (ask families to help you find lots!). Invite children to cut out pictures of grain products and paste them onto construction paper. Suggest children draw pictures of their heads and faces. Paste grain pictures on top part of the head (grains are good for our brains!) and draw on a smiling face!



Winter's Harvest

Tip: Winter squashes are great vegetable to explore since they all have different shapes and tastes. There are many ways to cook and eat winter squash. Encourage children to look at the different types of squash they may see in the grocery store and which ones they don't typically see all year round.

Get ready:

- A variety of winter squash, such as pumpkin, acorn, spaghetti or butternut squash.
- Cut the squash in halves or slices to reveal the seeds. :
- Magnifying glasses, one for every 2-3 children
- Potting soil
- Paper cups

Get going:

1. Set the squash out on a tray and invite children to explore them using a magnifying glass. Encourage children to touch and talk about the feel of the squash.
2. Ask children if they have tasted the different squash. Name the different kinds of squash. Tell children that squash is a healthy vegetable. Toddlers should be supervised to make sure they do not eat any seeds which could be a choking hazard.
3. Choose one of the squashes to bake and serve. Try baking spaghetti squash and serve with tomato sauce. See *Let's Go Cook!* for a baked sweet potato fries recipe.

Next time:

- Try this with another vegetable in season.
- To extend the activity invite children to take home some seeds to dry and then plant. Or plan these in a school garden



Yogo Pops

Tip: Regular popsicles tend to have a lot of added sugar and little nutrition. Use this activity to introduce healthy and tasty fruits in a fun way. Make the yogo pops at the beginning of the day so that they can have enough time to freeze to enjoy later.

Get ready:

Find the recipe in *Let's go Cook!*

- Make about 1 ¼ cup each of pureed bananas, peaches, or berries using a food processor or blender. Place each type of puree into 2 small serving bowls
- One cup low-fat vanilla or fruit flavored yogurt, dished into 2-3 small serving bowls
- Serving spoons
- 3 oz. paper cups, enough for each child to have 2-3 cups
- Wooden craft or popsicle sticks
- Plastic wrap, wax paper or foil pieces (about 5" x 5")

Get going:

1. Have children wash their hands and gather at a table.
2. Place a cup and craft stick in front of each child.
3. Pass the serving containers of yogurt. Direct children to fill their cup one quarter full of yogurt
4. Next pass the serving containers of pureed fruit. Guide children to fill their cups up to halfway with the fruit puree. .
5. Invite children to use the craft sticks to carefully swirl the ingredients in their cup.
6. When they are finished swirling, guide the children to leave the stick in cup with the end extending up for a handle. Label the stick with the child's name.
7. Place a piece of plastic wrap, wax paper or foil over the top of each cup allowing the stick to punch through the center.
8. Place the covered cups on a level tray. Place the tray in the freezer. Freeze for several hours until firm.
9. At snack time, remove the paper cup and enjoy the healthy treat!

Next time:

- Smoothies are a great option to turn into frozen treats. Try blending multiple fruits and milk together before pouring into cups. See the *Let's Go Cookbook* for smoothie recipes.



*Journey to a Healthy
Child Care Home*
Template for Writing a Policy
for Healthy Eating



Template for Writing a Policy for Healthy Eating

Title: (Your program's name or your name) Family Child Care Policy for Healthy Eating

Introductory Statement (example):

Children's health is important. This Family Child Care Home works to provide the best possible environment for healthy eating and active play for the children. To accomplish this I have adopted these policies. I appreciate support from the parents and families to promote the health of our children.

[or Write your Introductory Statement here]: _____

Healthy Eating:

In the [*your Family Child Care Home name*] I will:

Fruits and Vegetables

- Serve a fruit or vegetable at least 3 times a day for children who participate for the full day, or 2 times for children who participate for a half day.
- Serve vegetables that are steamed, boiled, roasted, or lightly stir-fried with little added fat.
- Use healthy fats when preparing food such as olive, canola, soybean, corn, safflower, and sunflower oils.
- I Serve 100% Juice instead of a fruit or vegetable serving no more than once a day (or less often). I will limit juice to 4-6 ounces/day.
- Add your ideas here _____

Fried Foods and High Fat Meats

- Serve fried or pre-fried meats only once a week or less.
- Serve fried or pre-fired potatoes once a week or less.
- Serve high fat meats like sausage, bacon, hot dogs, or bologna once a week or less.
- Add your ideas here _____

Beverages

- Make drinking water freely available so children can serve themselves.
- Never (or rarely) serve sweetened drinks other than 100% juice.
- Serve 1% or skim milk most often to children age 2 or older. Add your ideas here _____

Menus and Variety



Let's Go Eat Healthy!

- Use a cycle of repeating menus
- Plan menus to include healthy items from a variety of cultures.
- Add your ideas here _____

Meals and Snacks at the Center

- Encourage children to eat the appropriate amount of food and will teach them about hunger and fullness cues.
- Plan the meal schedule to provide enough time for children to eat meals and snacks without rushing.
- Rarely serve sweets or high fat/salt foods.
- Encourage children but not force them to try new foods
- Will never withhold food for poor behavior, or use food to reward good behavior.
- Add your ideas here _____

Other Foods Served – for activities or celebrations

- Serve wholesome foods for tasting and other food related activities, and will offer appropriate opportunities for children to participate in cooking activities.
- (I will or will not) provide opportunities for families to send in food for special celebrations. (See the Guidelines for foods from home section below.) **Noter: *If a child with food allergies is attending your child care home – you may consider a no foods from home policy for the safety of those children.***
- Add your ideas here _____

Modeling Healthy Eating

- Sit and eat meals and snacks with children most of the time
- Usually serve foods family style.
- Usually eat the same food and drinks as the children.
- Try to demonstrate healthy eating habits in front of children.
- Add your ideas here _____

Nutrition Education for Kids, and Parents

- Teach children about nutrition and healthy eating.
- Occasionally provide nutrition information and education for families.
- Add your ideas here _____

Food from Home:

In the [your Family Child Care Home name] I will:

Guidelines for meals sent from home

- Encourage parent's who provide meals for their child to send healthy foods. I will provide the USDA guidelines for recommended meal patterns available online at: http://www.fns.usda.gov/cnd/care/programbasics/meals/meal_patterns.htm



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- ❑ *I may/I will* monitor meals sent from home and supplement food if needed to meet USDA guidelines. (For additional information see the Child Care Division Rules for Providers, available online at: http://www.oregon.gov/EMPLOY/CCD/forProviders.shtml#Child_Care_Division_Rules)
- ❑ Provide a serving of nonfat or low-fat milk at lunch for the children who bring lunches from home.
- ❑ Encourage families to bring the meal in a bag or lunch box that is labeled with the child's name, date and the type of foods.
- ❑ Encourage parents to keep foods properly chilled by transporting them in a brown bag or lunch box with an ice pack. Food will be stored in the refrigerator until it is served.
- ❑ Remind families to send food that is nutritious, clean and safe to eat.
- ❑ Inform parents that my child care home does not allow soft drinks, candy, sugary desserts or high fat chips.
- ❑ Ensure that food from home will not be shared with other children.
- ❑ Encourage families to meet nutrition and food safety guidelines. If problems occur I will provide meals and refer the family to their medical provider, a dietitian or WIC nutritionist for guidance.
- ❑ Note: If a child with severe food allergies joins this child care home, special arrangements may be made, and foods from home may not be permitted.
- ❑ Add your ideas here _____

Food for celebrations

In the [your Family Child Care Home name] I will:

Guidelines for celebrations (and foods sent from home)

- ❑ I celebrate special events through good nutrition and by promoting active play.
- ❑ I celebrate special events with favorite stories, music, games, and activities.
- ❑ I will work with families who would like to bring food from home for special events.
- ❑ I allow only healthy foods for special celebrations. These include: fresh fruits, vegetables with low fat dip, low fat granola bars, low fat whole grain muffins, 100% fruit pops, yogurt cups, fruit cups packed in juice, string cheese and whole grain crackers, graham crackers, mini bagels or raisin bread with low-fat cream cheese, and other similar foods. Please arrange with me in advance so we can choose a healthy food item.
- ❑ All foods brought for celebration events must be purchased from a reputable grocery store, must not exceed "use by" dates and include labels that indicate nutrient content. Sorry, home prepared foods will not be accepted.
- ❑ Add your ideas here _____



Let's Go Eat Healthy!

Let's Go Eat Healthy

Resources



Guide to Seasonal Fruits and Vegetables

(Adapted from: *TRI-COUNTY Farm Fresh Produce Guide* available online at: www.tricountyfarm.org)

	APRIL	MAY	JUNE	JULY	AUG	SEPT	OCT	NOV	DEC
Apples				JULY	AUG	SEPT	OCT	NOV	
Apricots				JULY	AUG				
Asparagus		MAY	JUNE	JULY					
Beans				JULY	AUG	SEPT			
Bedding Plants	APRIL	MAY	JUNE	JULY					
Beets				JULY	AUG	SEPT	OCT		
Blackberries				JULY	AUG	SEPT			
Blueberries				JULY	AUG	SEPT			
Boysenberries			JUNE	JULY					
Broccoli				JULY	AUG	SEPT	OCT		
Cabbage				JULY	AUG	SEPT	OCT	NOV	
Cauliflower					AUG	SEPT	OCT	NOV	
Cherries			JUNE	JULY					
Corn					AUG	SEPT	OCT		
Cucumbers				JULY	AUG	SEPT			
Dry Onions						SEPT	OCT	NOV	DEC
Filberts							OCT	NOV	DEC
Herb Plants	APRIL	MAY	JUNE	JULY					
Marionberries				JULY					
Peaches				JULY	AUG	SEPT			
Pears					AUG	SEPT	OCT		
Peppers					AUG	SEPT	OCT		
Plums/ Prunes					AUG	SEPT			
Potatoes				JULY	AUG	SEPT	OCT	NOV	DEC
Pumpkins							OCT	NOV	
Raspberries			JUNE	JULY	AUG	SEPT			
Rhubarb	APRIL	MAY	JUNE	JULY					
Squash				JULY	AUG	SEPT	OCT	NOV	DEC
Strawberries			JUNE	JULY					
Tomatoes				JULY	AUG	SEPT	OCT		



General Nutrition

1. My Pyramid.gov for Preschoolers (Age 2 to 5) and MyPyramid for Kids (Age 6-11):

<http://www.mypyramid.gov/preschoolers/index.html>

<http://www.mypyramid.gov/kids/>

This site offers basic nutrition information for preschoolers and young children. Learn how the amount of foods from each food group can be tailored based on children's age, gender and activity level. Sample menus are also available.

2. Dietary Guidelines for Americans:

<http://www.health.gov/dietaryguidelines/>

These guidelines provides advice for children age two years and older and adults on the importance of establishing good dietary habits which promote health and reduce risk for major chronic diseases. The guidelines are the basis for Federal food programs such as the Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP) and nutrition education programs.

3. Fruits & Veggies- More Matters:

<http://www.fruitsandveggiesmatter.gov/>

Fruits & Veggies — More Matters™ is a dynamic health initiative that replaces the existing 5 A Day awareness program to inspire and support consumers to eat more fruits and vegetables. This site provides general information on the benefits of fruits and vegetables, nutrition information and recipes.

4. Meet the Fats:

<http://www.americanheart.org/presenter.ihtml?identifier=3071938>

Developed by the American Heart Association, this site offers an interactive description of the different types of fats, using the "Bad Brothers" (Trans, and Sat), and the "Better Sisters" (Mon, and Poly). It includes videos, information and samples of good and bad fats. This website is directed to elementary and middle school children however resources that are helpful include food group cards which can be used in *Let's Go Eat Healthy* activities.

Food Group Cards: http://www.heart.org/idc/groups/gwtg-public/@wcm/@global/documents/downloadable/ucm_305582.pdf

5. USDA Team Nutrition Healthy Meals Resource System:

http://healthymeals.nal.usda.gov/nal_display/index.php?tax_level=1&info_center=14&tax_subject221

This site has many links to activity ideas for preschoolers. Below are several samples:

Grow It, Try It, Like It! Preschool Fun with Fruits and Vegetables! Located on the team nutrition website this curriculum kit focuses on introducing three fruits and three vegetables into the diet of young children. This site includes a set of lessons and six fruit or vegetable booklets which



Let's Go Eat Healthy!

contain: hands-on activities, planting activities, and nutrition education activities that introduce *MyPyramid for Preschoolers*. <http://teamn nutrition.usda.gov/Resources/growit.html>

More Than Mud Pies - Fifth Edition: This is a nutrition education curriculum provides both activities that offers 54 lessons are built around the seasons of the year. These activities to help preschool age children learn about growth, nutrition and food preparation. <http://nfsmi.org/ResourceOverview.aspx?ID=247>

The Power Panther Implementation Guide developed by Team Nutrition in cooperation with the Child and Adult Care Food Program provides activities that support the consumption of fruits and vegetables and increasing physical activity. http://www.powerpanther.org/TN_Docs/PP_Preschool_Implementation_Guide.pdf

Model Health: Promoting Nutrition and Physical Activity in Children is a kit developed by the Maryland State Department of Education in conjunction with the Maryland Committee on Children provides activities that provide opportunities for caregiver to model healthy behaviors. <http://healthymeals.nal.usda.gov/hsmrs/Maryland/MODELHealth.pdf>

Non food Rewards

1. Rewards Kids Will Crave (Sponsored by Utah Department of Health):

<http://health.utah.gov/hearhighway/pdfs/RewardsKids.pdf>

A 30-page pdf of a booklet for teachers on using non-food rewards. Explains why they are important and provides a bunch of ideas for alternatives to food.

Introducing New Foods and Meal Time Dynamics

1. Raising Healthy Children: Introducing New Foods to Your Preschooler:

<http://edis.ifas.ufl.edu/pdffiles/FY/FY114200.pdf>

The University of Florida Institute of Food and Agricultural Sciences created this brief 3-page pdf with tips on how to introduce new foods into the diets of preschool children.

2. Ellyn Satter's Division of the Responsibilities of Feeding:

www.ellynsatter.com

This link provides information on how to feed children so that they become competent eaters and promotes fostering the feeding relationship.



General Health Information

1. Healthy Children:

<http://www.healthychildren.org/English/Pages/default.aspx>

Developed by the American Academy of Pediatrics this website is a rich resource of practical health information. Links to topics related to nutrition and fitness are provided and ages and stages category helps caregivers to obtain age individualized advice.

2. Snack Smart for Healthy Teeth:

<http://www2.nidcr.nih.gov/health/pubs/snaksmrt/main.htm>

Highlights the importance of keeping teeth healthy and provides a listing of healthy snacks that help promote healthy teeth and gums.

3. U.S. Department of Human Health & Services: Office of Surgeon General:

<http://www.surgeongeneral.gov/obesityprevention/index.html>

This site focuses on the childhood obesity prevention initiative and promotes the importance of healthy eating and physical activity at a young age to help prevent overweight and obesity

4. Preventing Childhood Obesity: Health in Balance:

<http://www.iom.edu/Reports/2004/Preventing-Childhood-Obesity-Health-in-the-Balance.aspx>

Final report and related materials from Institute of Medicine's study assessing childhood obesity in the US.