**True or false:** Eating fruits and vegetables of different colors will help give my child the nutrients he needs to stay healthy.

**Answer:** True! The bright colors not only make fruits and vegetables fun to eat—each color actually indicates a different vitamin or mineral. Try these suggestions to encourage your youngster to “eat a rainbow.”

**Roy G. Biv**
Combine a nutrition lesson with a science one. Have your child learn the order of the colors in a rainbow (or the visible light spectrum) by “getting to know” Roy G. Biv: red, orange, yellow, green, blue, indigo, and violet. He could draw an outline of “Roy” and color it in with each fruit and vegetable he eats. Example: Color Roy’s head red for strawberries, his neck orange for cantaloupe, and his feet violet for eggplant.

**Eat what you wear**
Challenge your youngster to eat colors matching his clothes. Say he’s dressed in blue jeans and a white T-shirt with a green and orange design. He might have blueberries for a snack, cauliflower and a green salad at dinner, and an orange before bed. Ask him how many other matching fruits or vegetables he could name. **Tip:** Join your child, and point out produce that matches your clothes, too.

**Shop for a rainbow**
At the grocery store, let your youngster put a “rainbow” into a child’s shopping cart or a separate basket. He might pick one or two fruits and vegetables for each color. When you get home, he could arrange them into a rainbow and take a photo of his creation—before it’s all eaten!

**Family fitness time**
Get your youngsters thinking about ways to be active by putting them in charge of a regular family fitness night. Begin by setting aside one night a week for “The Smith Family Fitness Night.” Be sure to mark it on your kitchen calendar, along with whose turn it is to be the leader. That person decides on the week’s activity. Share these four ideas to get your children thinking:
1. Play kickball.
2. Hold a jump-rope contest.
3. Create an upbeat playlist, and dance to the music.
4. Have wheelbarrow races (hold another person by her legs as she “walks” with her arms).
Here’s why I like school meals!

Eating school breakfast and lunch is not only a healthy option for your youngster, it’s a time-saver for you. Encourage her to enjoy cafeteria meals with these stories from other kids:

- “A hot meal tastes better than a cold sandwich.”
- “It’s fun to be able to choose which fruit to have for dessert. Some days I want apple slices, and other days I’m in the mood for a banana.”
- “A hot meal tastes better than a cold sandwich.”
- “It’s fun to be able to choose which fruit to have for dessert. Some days I want apple slices, and other days I’m in the mood for a banana.”
- “I used to be a picky eater. But I’ve gotten used to trying new foods at school. Now Mom buys things like jicama and kiwi for me to have at home, too.”
- “The cafeteria workers always smile at me when I take my tray. I think they’re happy to see me!”
- “Every night, my dad and I read the next day’s menu so I can decide what I’ll eat. I like hearing his stories about what school lunch was like when he was a kid.”

Note: Your child might qualify for free or reduced-price school meals. Call or stop by the school office to ask about this.

O&A

Q: I've read that children consume too much salt. How much is too much, and how can we cut down?

A: The daily recommended amount of salt varies by age: less than 1,900 mg for 4- to 8-year-olds, and less than 2,200 mg for 9- to 13-year-olds.

What people often don’t realize is that salt is an acquired taste. If your children get used to having less salt, eventually they won’t want salty food anyway—it won’t taste good to them.

To start on that path, try to limit foods like these: fast food, canned soups, chips, packaged meals, bacon, processed meats, and soy sauce. Rinse canned vegetables to remove extra salt, and look for items marked “no salt added” or “low sodium.”

Finally, keep the salt shaker off the table—if it’s not there, your family won’t use it!

OUR PURPOSE

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

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Nutrition Nuggets™ is reviewed by a registered dietitian. Consult a physician before beginning any major change in diet or exercise.

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Put away the salt

A slice of pizza

Put pizzazz into pizza dinners with these twists.

Nacho. This Mexican mash-up substitutes a ready-made whole-wheat pizza crust for tortilla chips. Layer the crust with 1 can black beans (rinsed, drained), 2 tbsp. sliced scallions, 1 cup diced tomatoes, and ½ cup diced red bell peppers. Add ½ cup shredded Monterey jack cheese. Bake at 400º until heated through, 10–15 minutes.

Spinach-artichoke.

For a spin on spinach-artichoke dip, top a large whole-grain flatbread with diced artichoke hearts (1 can, drained and rinsed), 2 cups baby spinach, 4-oz. cream cheese (cut into small pieces), and 1 cup crumbled feta. Bake at 400º until the crust is browned, 15–20 minutes.

Mushroom crust. Here’s a tasty gluten-free option. Place four portabello mushrooms (stems removed) upside down on a baking sheet. Bake 10 minutes at 400º. Saute 1 can (14-oz.) diced tomatoes with 1 tsp. tomato paste, 1 tsp. oregano, and ½ tsp. sugar. Spoon the sauce into the mushrooms, sprinkle with shredded mozzarella, and bake 10 minutes more.