

Food, Fun & Games:

Healthy Activities for Children in Child Care



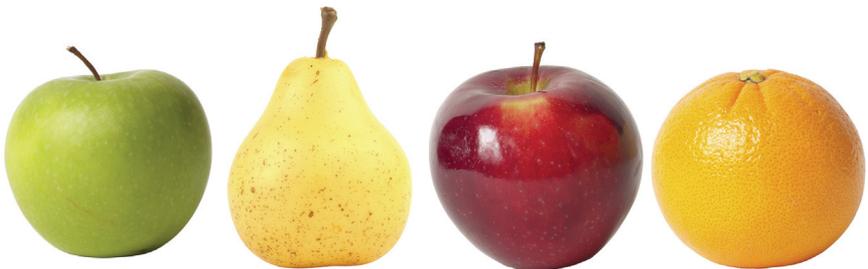
Introduction

Nutrition and physical activity are an important part of a child's development. Early exposure to a wide range of healthy foods will support optimal growth and regular physical activity will help build strong bones and the development of important motor skills.

Child care providers play an important role in the development of a child. By providing plenty of opportunities for young children to engage in regular physical activity and exposing them to a range of healthy foods, children will be able to build good eating habits and be active every day.

Included in this booklet is a range of low-cost to no-cost activities to help child care providers incorporate healthy foods and physical activity into daily activities to make sure children are happy, healthy and ready to learn.*

*Not all activities are appropriate for all children. Age of the child and special needs (including food allergies) should be considered when planning activities.



Learning about Fruits and Vegetables

Fruits and vegetables give children the energy and nutrients they need to grow up healthy. Incorporating educational lessons about a variety of fruits and vegetables is important in teaching children good food habits. Below are some ideas on how to integrate fruits and vegetables into daily child development activities.

IDEA Number 1

Bring a new fruit or vegetable every week and use it to teach about the five senses.

For example:

Bring a mango one day and ask:

- What color is the mango?
- What shape is the mango?
- How does it smell?
- How does it feel?
- How does it taste?



IDEA Number 2

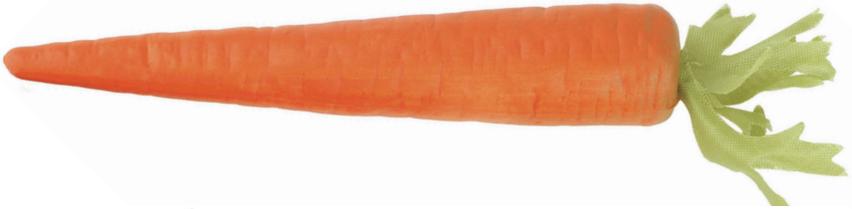
Show how the fruits and vegetables we eat come from different parts of plants.

Have children taste:

- Seeds – sunflower seeds, pumpkin seeds, or peas
- Roots – like carrots
- Stems – like celery or asparagus
- Leaves – like lettuce
- Flowers – like broccoli
- Fruit – like strawberries



**You may want to bring some fat-free ranch dressing to encourage them to taste the celery or broccoli.



IDEA Number 3

Explore how food is grown.

- Build a classroom garden (inside or out). When there is limited space, plants can be grown indoors using pots or plastic cups with some seeds, a little soil, water, and a sunny window.
- Work with your local community garden or farmers market to buy fresh fruits and vegetables
- Learn about food sources by taking field trips to local orchards, farms, or fields.



TRY THIS!!!

Watch Beans GROW!

Place 3-4 dry beans in a closed plastic sandwich bag with a wet paper towel. Beans will begin to sprout in 4-5 days. Open the bag when the stems need more room to grow. You can staple the bags onto a bulletin board so the children can see how the bean plants grow more and more each day!

Watch Carrots SPROUT!

Cut off the top of the carrot and tear off its leaves. Place the carrot top in a shallow dish of water and watch how the leaves will begin to re-sprout!

IDEA Number 4

Explore different parts of the country or world including what types of foods naturally grow there and how climate can affect crop growth.

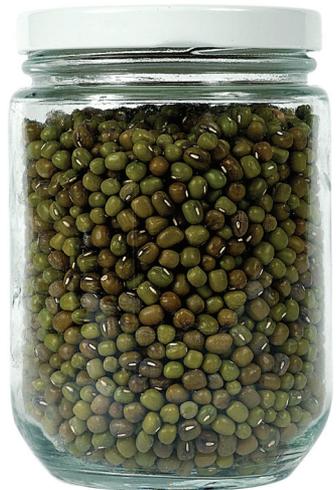
In Texas, citrus (oranges, grapefruits, and lemons) is a popular crop because of the warm weather.



IDEA Number 5

Use fruits and vegetables as part of arts and crafts

- Cut potatoes into shapes and dip them into paint to make stamps
- String dried fruit to make edible necklaces
- Glue a variety of seeds and beans to paper to make pictures



Incorporating ☆ Other Healthy Foods

Fruits and vegetables are always healthy, but other foods are important for children's growth and development as well. Here's a few ways to teach children about other healthy foods.

IDEA Number 1

Use food to teach about counting, math, colors, textures, sequencing, and other skills.

- Have children taste mozzarella string cheese (white) or cheddar cheese cubes (orange) when learning colors.
- Whole-wheat crackers can be used when learning about circles (or squares, depending on the cracker).
- Use soy beans when practicing counting, addition or subtraction. Try different varieties of beans (kidney, red, black) when practicing sequences and patterns.



IDEA Number 2

Use healthy food models (fruits, vegetables, milk, bread, juice) in “pretend” centers. Children can pretend to be a chef in a kitchen, a farmer picking fruits and vegetables, or a shopper and cashier in a grocery store.



IDEA Number 3

Create Bingo cards with healthy foods and teach about the benefits of eating healthy foods.

- Milk – builds strong bones and teeth
- Carrots – good for your eyes
- Chicken – makes your muscles strong

IDEA Number 4

Incorporate traditional foods when teaching about different cultures and holidays.

For example:

- Introduce jicama when teaching about Mexico or celebrating Cinco de Mayo.
- Provide hummus on pita bread as a snack when teaching about the Middle East.



IDEA Number 5

Do healthy cooking demonstrations to show that healthy, fresh food can be made at home and be fun. A recipe for a healthier version of a tortilla follows.

Whole Wheat Tortillas

Ingredients:

- 1 cup whole wheat flour
- 1 cup all-purpose flour
- ½ tsp. salt
- 2 tbsp. canola oil
- ¾ cup water



1. Combine flours and salt in a medium bowl. Add oil and water and mix with a fork until dough holds together.
2. Knead the dough on a floured surface for about 5 minutes. If dough becomes too sticky to handle, add more all-purpose flour to the work surface. Encourage the children to participate by showing them how to knead the dough and then allowing them to knead a small piece on their own.
3. Divide the dough into 12 pieces and let the children form a ball with each piece by rolling the dough in their hands. Add a small amount of oil to a bowl and place the dough balls in the bowl, one at a time, coating each with oil. Cover the bowl with a towel and let stand 15-30 minutes.
4. Roll each dough ball with a rolling pin into a 6 inch circle. Place tortilla in a preheated, ungreased skillet and heat until brown spots appear on the bottom. Flip the tortilla and cook for an additional minute. Cool slightly and serve.

** You can make this into a snack or meal by adding a slice of cheese or some black beans to your tortilla.

Making Physical Activity F-U-N!

Caregivers play an important role in shaping children's attitudes and behaviors about physical activity. Making physical activity a fun part of a child's daily routine is an important first step.

IDEA Number 1

Spend time each day going on a daily walk

- Walk to a park to play on a different playground
- Go on a nature walk and teach about trees, leaves, and the environment
- Take regular classroom walks after lunch to help food digest

IDEA Number 2

- Play Games
- Relay races
- Hide-and-go-Seek
- Duck-Duck-Goose
- Simon Says
- Tag
- Four-square
- Kick ball



IDEA Number 3

Dance

- Play music indoors between activities or outdoors to encourage movement
- Use limited amounts of TV Time to enjoy programs like “The Wiggles” and “The Adventures of Zobey” that encourage children to dance and move around.
- Set aside regular dance time and use music such as Hokie Pokie and other educational songs



IDEA Number 4

Support Independent Activity

- Set aside supervised outside free-time to support outside play
- Provide access to balls, hula-hoops and jump ropes for children to play with

IDEA Number 5

Teacher-led Activities

- Incorporate lesson where children imitate animals such as galloping like a horse, rolling like a dog, hopping like a frog, crawling like a lizard, and running like a cheetah
- Helping in the school or community garden by digging, planting, and weeding
- Have themed activity days like Water Sprinkler day, Olympics Day, or Field Day



Additional Resources:

Animal Trackers Activity

<http://www.healthy-start.com/animal.pdf>

Fruit & Veggies Matter

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

Fun Fitness Activities for Children

<http://www.dhss.mo.gov/PhysicalActivity/Activities.htm>

Go & Slow Foods Activity and Song

<http://www.healthy-start.com/hops.pdf>

Healthy Child Care Texas

<http://www.healthychildcaretexas.org/>

Nutrition Guidance & Activities for Child Care Homes

<http://www.fns.usda.gov/tn/Resources/nutritioncount.html>

Music & Physical Activity for Preschoolers

<http://www.cnr.berkeley.edu/cwh/PDFs/Kimbrell.pdf>

MyPyramid of Preschoolers

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

Preschool Fitness Activities

<http://fitness.preschoolrock.com/index.php/home>

Texas Department of Agriculture - Food and Nutrition Division

<http://www.agr.state.tx.us>



Texas Department of State Health Services

Publication number 1-182

09/2009

This publication is underwritten by the Office of Title V & Family Health, Texas Department of State Health Services, using Title V Maternal and Child Health Block Grant Funds