You want your child to eat a variety of fruits, vegetables, lean protein, and whole grains. He wants macaroni and cheese. Always. Try these strategies to break through his picky-eater pattern.

**Get friends involved**

The next time you’re carpooling, lead a game of “I like to eat healthy _____, do you?” The kids can go around, answering with foods they enjoy. Make a note to serve some of the foods mentioned by friends. Your youngster just may be willing to try ones that his peers like!

**Guess the mystery ingredient**

Add an unfamiliar food to a dish that includes a few of your child’s favorite ingredients. For example, toss kiwi into a fruit salad. Or put lima beans in mixed vegetables. Have him close his eyes and take a few bites. Let him name the familiar foods and guess the new one.

**Vitamin K helps blood clot and keeps bones healthy.** To be sure your youngster gets the recommended amount, try adding spinach, kale, lettuce, and other leafy greens to her diet. More good sources of vitamin K include brussels sprouts, blueberries, broccoli, and figs.

**Just for fun**

**Q:** What can you catch in the winter with your eyes closed?

**A:** A cold.

**Fitness coding**

When does ABC mean hop, crawl, and skip? When kids combine coding with fitness in this game! Here’s how.

1. Have your youngster write the alphabet down the left side of a sheet of paper and fill in a movement beside each letter. For example, A = hop on one foot for 10 seconds, B = crawl like a crab, C = skip to the tree and back.

2. Now take turns secretly choosing a word and doing the movements for each letter. Other players consult the list and write the “code” by figuring out which letter matches each movement. So if the code is s-n-o-w, the secret word is snow. The first person to say the word picks the next one.
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**Bullying and food allergies**

Nearly a third of youngsters with food allergies report being bullied about not being able to eat certain foods. If your child has a food allergy or is friends with someone who does, she can use this advice.

**Recognize bullying.** If a classmate knows that someone is allergic to a food and waves it in her face, pressures her to eat it, or puts it on her cafeteria tray, that’s bullying. It’s also dangerous and could make the child sick or possibly lead to death. Your child needs to let an adult know right away if this happens.

**Keep food safe.** If your youngster has food allergies, help her protect herself from bullies. For example, tell her to only accept food from a trusted adult who is aware of her allergy. Also, she shouldn’t leave her food unattended. She could ask a friend to help her keep an eye on her cafeteria tray, or she can offer to look out for a friend who is allergic.

*Note: Make sure your child knows which foods she is allergic to and is familiar with the symptoms of a reaction.*

**O & A** Organized sports: Finding the best fit

**Q:** My daughter wants to join a sports team, but I don’t know where to start. Any suggestions?

**A:** Taking part in an organized sport is a terrific way for your child to stay active. Plus, it can boost her self-esteem and social skills. Start by talking with your daughter about her interests. Which sports does she enjoy playing during PE or on the playground?

Then, see what’s available in your area. Your youngster’s school and the parks and recreation department are good places to start. Look into the time commitment and costs involved in various sports. To learn more, you could also talk to other parents whose children have participated.

Finally, consider having her try a few sports, perhaps one each season, to find her favorites.

**Indoor scavenger hunts**

Amp up the indoor fun this winter with a scavenger hunt for your child and his friends.

**• Color hunt.** Assign each child a different color, then hide a dozen Legos or blocks of each color. Players race to find all the blocks of their color.

**• Puzzle hunt.** Break out a 25-piece jigsaw puzzle and hide the pieces around the house. When the youngsters have all 25 pieces, they can put the puzzle together.

**• Shape hunt.** Ask the children to list all the shapes they can think of. They can run around and each try to find one item of every shape. Maybe the remote control is a rectangular prism, a soccer ball is a sphere, and a paper towel is a square.

**In the Kitchen**

Try these big-batch spins on family favorites.

**Slow-cooker chicken chili**

In a slow cooker, combine the following:

- 2 lbs. boneless chicken breasts (cubed)
- 16-oz. cans pinto beans (drained, rinsed)
- 14-oz. can diced tomatoes
- 15-oz. can tomato sauce
- 1½ cups frozen corn
- 1 tbsp. chili powder
- 1 tsp. each cumin, dried oregano, and minced garlic

Cook on high for 1 hour, then on low for 3–4 hours.

**Lentil vegetarian chili**

In a large pot, stir together:

- 4 14.5-oz. cans diced tomatoes
- 2 15-oz. cans kidney beans (drained, rinsed)
- 3 cups low-sodium vegetable broth
- 2 cups uncooked green lentils
- 1½ cups each diced onion and bell pepper
- 3 tbsp. chili powder
- 2 tbsp. garlic powder

Boil, then cover and simmer 30 minutes, stirring occasionally. Stir in:

- 1 8-oz. can tomato sauce
- 1 6-oz. can tomato paste

Heat 5 minutes more.

**Our Purpose**

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

**Resources for Educators,**

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Power Up! Power Down!

Screens may be everywhere these days, but that doesn’t mean your child needs one to have fun! In fact, your youngster can have even more fun—and stay healthier—by powering down the screens and powering up the physical activity. Here’s how.

Tip #1: Keep a log

With this poster, family members will see at a glance how much time they spend being active vs. in front of a screen. Let your child divide a poster board into two columns: “Active time” and “Screen time.” For every 15 minutes a family member does something like badminton or yoga, he can draw a picture in the first column (birdie, yoga pose). And for every 15 minutes spent on a screen, he should draw the device used (TV, laptop, video game, smartphone) in the second column. Help your youngster tally up your totals once a week. If your family had more screen time than active time, aim to improve by at least 15 minutes the following week.

Tip #2: Promote playtime

Encourage your child to play actively for at least 60 minutes every day. Chances are she’ll get so caught up in playing, she’ll forget all about screens. Try this: Make a “play door.” You and your youngster could write ideas for active play on sticky notes (“fly a kite,” “juggle balls”). Place these notes on her bedroom door or inside the front door. When she has free time, she can pick an activity—or think of a new one to add.

Tip #3: Find your niche

Your child can’t play a video game if he’s climbing an indoor rock wall or tumbling across a mat! Give him healthy ways to use his time by letting him take a class or join a team. Check out classes and groups at community centers, after-school programs, or places of worship. He can try various activities until he finds ones he likes. He might decide on rock climbing, running, gymnastics, or even pickleball.

Tip #4: Fill a “TV basket”

Keep a basket of your youngster’s toys near the TV. Then, instead of watching shows, she gets to play with something from the basket. Switch up the contents each week to keep things interesting. Include a Twister game, a jump rope, or a library book of children’s poems to act out, for instance.

Active alternatives

Here are 10 quick, easy, and screen-free activities your youngster can enjoy indoors or outdoors.

1. Form a marching band with toy instruments (or pots, pans, and wooden spoons).
2. Play leapfrog.
3. See which foot you can balance on the longest.
4. Form a conga line—stand in a row, hold onto the shoulders of the person in front of you, and “snake” through the house or yard.
5. Make up and perform cheers.
6. Hold a limbo contest.
7. Tape down a long piece of yarn as a “tightrope,” and walk on it.
8. Do the hokey-pokey.
9. Have an egg-and-spoon relay race—hard-boil the eggs first!

continued
Give screens a break

It's easier to avoid watching TV or using your phone if you plan ahead. Consider these ways to manage screen time for the whole family:

- Set a “screen bedtime” at least an hour before your youngster's bedtime. Your child may enjoy “tucking in” the TV or computer for the night by covering it with a blanket and placing a stuffed animal beside it.
- Keep TVs and other devices out of your youngster's bedroom. He'll have less screen time, and it'll be easier for you to supervise his activities.
- Switch off computers, video game systems, and TVs when you're not using them. After your family watches a show, turn off the TV rather than channel surfing to find more programs. And if your laptop is off, you'll be less tempted to constantly check work email or social networks.
- Turn your car into a screen-free zone. Make a point of showing your child how you put your phone in your bag or glove compartment before you start the car. Then, enjoy time together by talking about the scenery, counting cars of a specific color, or singing songs.

Tip #5: Start a club

Suggest that your child launch a “Fitness Club” with her friends. Members should agree on a time to meet and take turns hosting. Each week's host gets to choose the activity. One week they might play follow the leader through a sprinkler, while another week they could organize a kickball game. Idea: Mix things up by offering to take them on field trips for activities they haven't tried—say, to play volleyball at a sand volleyball pit in the park.

Tip #6: Enjoy the outdoors

There's so much to discover outside. Look for active ways to enjoy nature together. For instance, your youngster could take a blank notebook on a family walk and draw pictures of the trees and plants. Or you might ride bikes on a path you haven't explored before. Gardening is good exercise, too—and you'll boost your family's health even more by eating the vegetables and herbs you and your child grow.

Tip #7: Be the star

Challenge your youngster to develop her own active versions of favorite TV shows or video games. If she enjoys a reality dance program, she and her friends might put on music and make up dance routines. Or if she likes a video game with an obstacle course, she could set up her own course in the backyard to race over, under, around, and through with friends.

Tip #8: Volunteer to help others

Look for a place in your community where you can volunteer as a family. Check the parks and recreation department and your local United Way for active ideas. Perhaps you'll find a playground cleanup day or a trail-clearing event. Or train for a “fun run” or a 5K to support a good cause. Another idea is to help neighbors in need, perhaps ones who are older, have new babies, or are ill. You could offer to do yardwork, wash cars, or walk dogs.

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