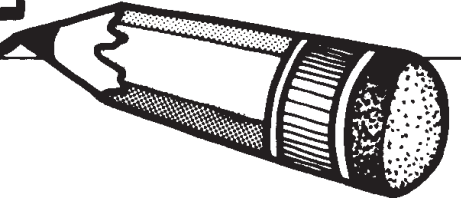


# Parenting Pipeline



*A newsletter for parents of kindergarten children  
from the North Dakota State University Extension Service*



## Developing Good Health Habits

Children may not understand why parents encourage good health habits. Children this age have a hard time thinking about abstract things such as the state of their health. It's hard for them to think about the future and how what they eat now will affect them when they get older.

### Fitness and Food

It is important to do everything possible to help children establish healthy eating habits at an early age.

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Your child's health depends on your guidance and example. As you reflect on your child's health and eating habits, remember to reflect on your own! The example you set is the most powerful indicator of the habits your child will develop.

No single food has all the nutrients in the amounts needed by your child. As a result, it is important for her to eat a variety of foods every day. If she appears to be tired and run down, it may be related to her eating and sleeping habits. Think about the pace she has been keeping, and help her practice healthy habits.

### Snacks

When your child arrives home from school or comes in from play, he may appear tired and sluggish. The right kinds of snacks will hold him over until the next meal and won't spoil his appetite.

Snacks are good for children, but a constant supply of junk food snacks is not good. An occasional treat or non-nutritional food is not a problem, but having chips and candy regularly for an after-school snack is not healthy.

### Name Your Snack

Post a list of acceptable snacks for your child, and allow her to name her snack when she is hungry. Some suggestions for this list might be:

- Build a super sundae with low-fat frozen yogurt, fresh fruit and chopped nuts.
- Make cheese pops by poking pretzel sticks into cheese cubes.

- Stir up a dip using 1 cup low-fat cottage cheese, ¼ cup mayonnaise, 1 teaspoon dill weed and 1 teaspoon dried onion. Serve with crunchy raw vegetables as dippers.
- Frozen banana chunks, seedless grapes, strawberries, blueberries, pineapple chunks and melon balls make refreshing cold snacks on a warm day.
- Make a quick-and-easy pizza. Split an English muffin then spread on spaghetti sauce, top with grated mozzarella cheese and microwave until bubbly.
- Whole-grain cereals are great as a topping for yogurt; mixed with sunflower seeds, pretzels and raisins for a take-along snack mix; or eaten straight out of the box. Whole-grain breakfast cereals are great anytime, not just in the morning.
- String cheese is a simple anytime snack.
- Freeze leftover waffles or pancakes, reheat and top with plain yogurt and berries.
- A hot bowl of soup sprinkled with cheese or croutons warms on a chilly day.
- Carrot sticks, raisins and celery stuffed with peanut butter or cheese are quick and easy to prepare.
- A bagel with a slice of melted cheese is nutritious and delicious.

## Body Care

Children need adequate rest and exercise, otherwise their bodies cannot absorb and use nutrients in food. Muscle tone and body functions improve with good diet and regular exercise. Your child needs to get out and build a snow fort, run indoors, take a brisk walk outside and have fun! Adults tend to think of this as “just playing,” but this activity is very important to both large muscle and fine muscle development.

Your child is now exposed to a variety of people in a variety of places. Since handwashing is the most effective way to prevent the spread of infections, teach your child how to wash and remind him

to wash often. He learns best by doing. Try to accompany him to the bathroom to assist him in establishing good habits. Most children love to wash and play with the soap. They just don't remember to do it! These tips can become a part of the routine:

- Use soap in a dispenser. Bar soap becomes contaminated and serves as a source of infection.
- Wet both hands and wrists well with warm water.
- Lather on the soap, palms first, but not forgetting the backs of hands and wrists.
- Scrub for at least 30 seconds, taking time to clean between the fingers.
- Rinse and dry completely.

A handmade poster or photo of proper hand-washing at eye level on the back of the bathroom door is a good reminder.

Good health habits are taught by your modeling and by taking time to be sure your child understands how to do things and why they are important now. Taking time to establish these routines will be a valuable investment in your child's future.

This newsletter is published for North Dakota families with kindergarten children by the NDSU Extension Service and distributed through your county extension office. See your extension agent for more parenting information and other nutrition, youth and family programs.