Food & Fitness: Let the Pyramids Be Your Guide

Your child is learning in the Jump Into Foods and Fitness (JIFF) program that eating lots of different foods is important to help him or her grow and be healthy. MyPyramid for Kids (see illustration) helps children make daily food and physical activity choices for a healthy lifestyle. Children and adults can visit http://www.MyPyramid.gov and enter their age, gender and activity level on the MyPyramid Plan to determine what amounts they need from each food group. No food group is more important than another – for good health, include them all.

To ensure that your family gets the nutrients they need to stay healthy, plan meals and snacks using many different foods from the five food groups. Make half of your grains whole, vary your veggies, focus on fruits, get your calcium-rich foods, go lean with protein, and limit food and beverages high in fats or sugars and low in nutrients.

Family Fitness Fun

The Kid's Activity Pyramid shows different types of physical activities that children can do to stay healthy. Physical activities we should do every day make up the base of the Activity Pyramid. The next level up shows activities that should be done at least three times a week. Two or three times a week, children should work on their strength and flexibility and participate in leisure activities. The narrow triangle at the top of the pyramid shows inactive pursuits that should be minimized.

Your child is learning that being physically active every day helps him or her be strong and healthy. Physical activity is fun, helps your child strengthen bones and muscles and feel good.

There are lots of different things you can do to be active. Physical activity doesn’t have to be running, swimming or playing a sport. Many household chores can also count as exercise. Raking leaves, shoveling snow, vacuuming or sweeping floors are all good ways to be active around the house. Taking a walk together can also be a great way to enjoy physical activity as a family.

Try This!

Try adding more physical activity to your family schedule by marching in place or stretching during the commercials while watching television. You’ll be adding more physical activity to a sedentary pastime.
**Mini Bread Pizzas**

Prepare this recipe with your child. When children are involved in preparing new foods, they’re more likely to try the new foods. Review and follow food safety rules about hand-washing with your child before preparing the recipe.

**Ingredients:**
- 6 English muffin or bagel halves
- 1 cup homemade or purchased pizza or spaghetti sauce
- 1 cup chopped toppings such as onions, peppers, mushrooms, tomatoes, broccoli, olives, tofu, ham, chicken, turkey, lean cooked hamburger
- 1 cup shredded part-skim mozzarella cheese

**Equipment:**
- Small bowls
- Dry measuring cups
- Chopping knife
- Cutting board
- Baking sheet

**Procedure:**
1. All food preparers must wash their hands with warm water and soap for 20 seconds before starting to prepare this recipe. Be sure that all work surfaces are clean.
2. Preheat oven to 350 °F.
3. Spread spaghetti or pizza sauce on the English muffin or bagel halves. Add toppings, then sprinkle with mozzarella cheese.
4. Place the pizzas on an ungreased baking sheet and bake for about 8 minutes, or until the cheese melts. Serve immediately.

Makes 6 servings.

**As Your Child Grows**

Eight- to 11-year-olds prefer to make or do things instead of just hearing about them.
- Grab a jump rope and see how many times either you or your child can jump!
- Cook together and experiment with different fruits and vegetables.

Children in this age range like to join groups – what a great way to make “exercise buddies.” Your child might like to join a 4-H club, scout troop or other group, or play on a sports team that encourages his or her skill development, not just team competition.

**On the Web**

If you and your child are interested in more ideas on health, take your child to the library and have him or her show you how to look up the Web site called KidsHealth [http://www.kidshealth.org/kid/](http://www.kidshealth.org/kid/).

Check out these Web sites with your child, too:
- The American Dietetic Association: [http://www.eatright.org](http://www.eatright.org)
- CDC’s Division of Nutrition and Physical Activity: [http://www.cdc.gov/nccdphp/dnpa/](http://www.cdc.gov/nccdphp/dnpa/)
- Gateway to Government Food Safety Information: [http://www.foodsafety.gov](http://www.foodsafety.gov)

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*Kangaroo Jump 1: Pyramids for Health Family Newsletter*

*Michigan State University Extension*