

Healthy Pantry

When your children open the refrigerator or cupboard, will they find fruits, vegetables, and other healthy snacks?

To help your family eat right, you'll want to have the right foods on hand. Use these tips for easy ways to stock nutritious foods and to make grocery shopping a fun learning experience for your youngsters.

..... Shop healthy

Healthy eating begins with healthy shopping. Here are two tips to get your family on the right track.

- Plan ahead. Try having a weekly "menu meeting" with your children.

Ask them for dinner suggestions, healthy snacks they'd like after school, and a new fruit or vegetable to try. In a special notebook, have them write or dictate their ideas to you.

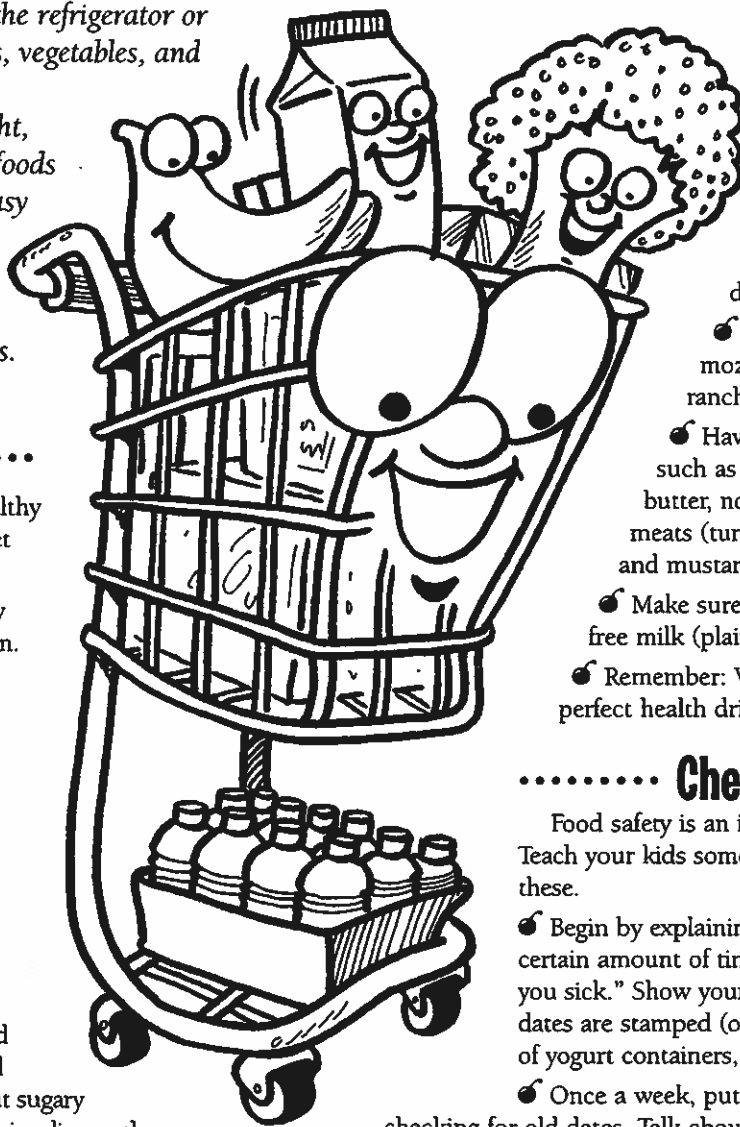
- Take your youngsters grocery shopping with you. Let them hold the shopping list, look for items, and check them off as you go. Have them compare labels to find foods lower in fat, calories, and salt. Steering clear of the candy and soda aisles will head off fights about sugary treats. Throughout your shopping trip, discuss the items you're putting in your basket, and praise your youngsters when they make nutritious choices.

..... Stock up!

Your youngsters will eat better if they have easy access to healthy food. Tempt your family with these suggestions.

- Get in the habit of leaving bowls of fresh fruit (apples, tangerines, grapes, bananas) on the kitchen counter or dining room table.

- Pick up bags of vegetables (cauliflower, broccoli, green beans) already washed and trimmed, ready to eat raw or pop into the microwave.



- Fill your pantry with nutritious snacks.

Examples: nuts, low-fat granola bars, baked crackers, applesauce cups, raisins, and rice cakes.

- Stock the cereal shelf with different whole-grain varieties.

- In the refrigerator, keep skim mozzarella string cheese and low-fat ranch dressing for a vegetable dip.

- Have a supply of sandwich items, such as whole-grain bread, peanut butter, no-sugar-added jam, lean deli meats (turkey, ham), light mayonnaise, and mustard.

- Make sure your refrigerator always has fat-free milk (plain or chocolate).

- Remember: Water from your faucet is the perfect health drink for your youngsters!

..... Check it twice

Food safety is an important part of healthy eating. Teach your kids some basics with simple ideas like these.

- Begin by explaining, "Some food goes bad after a certain amount of time. Eating it too late can make you sick." Show your children where the expiration dates are stamped (on the front of milk gallons, side of yogurt containers, top of cereal boxes).

- Once a week, put your youngsters in charge of checking for old dates. Talk about what to look for: "Use by" means the food should be thrown out on that date. "Sell by" means the grocer has to take it off the shelves, but you can use the food a little longer. "Best by" means the food will begin to lose flavor but is still safe to eat. (Check the government site www.fsis.usda.gov/fact_sheets/Food_Product_Dating/index.asp for guidance.)

- Rotate foods. When you bring groceries home, have your kids move the items with the oldest dates to the front of the refrigerator or pantry so they get used first. *Note:* Freezing products, such as meat or butter, keeps them safe to eat for much longer.



GROCERY LIST

Make copies of this list, and check off the items you need each week.

Fresh fruits

- Bananas
- Grapes
- Apples
- Pears
- Oranges
- Grapefruit
- Kiwi
- Plums
- Peaches
- Nectarines
- Mango
- Papaya
- Strawberries
- Blueberries
- Watermelon
- Cantaloupe
- Other _____

Fresh vegetables

- Broccoli
- Cauliflower
- Green beans
- Lettuce
- Greens (spinach, collard, kale)
- Tomatoes
- Cucumbers
- Squash (yellow, butternut, acorn, zucchini)
- Bell peppers (green, red, yellow, orange)
- Onions
- Potatoes
- Carrots
- Celery
- Mushrooms
- Other _____

Dairy

- Fat-free milk
- Butter
- Eggs
- Cottage cheese (low-fat)
- Cheese (low-fat cheddar, Monterey Jack)
- Cream cheese (low-fat)
- Yogurt (fat-free)
- Other _____

Grains

- Bread (bagels, English muffins, tortillas, pita)
- Cereal (cold)
- Oatmeal
- Pasta
- Rice
- Grits
- Barley
- Couscous
- Crackers
- Popcorn
- Other _____

Note: Try to find whole-grain varieties for each.

Fish

- Tuna (canned, packed in water)
- Salmon (canned or fresh)
- Fresh fish (check for varieties available)
- Other _____

Meat/Poultry

- Lean ground beef
- Lean ground turkey

- Chicken (skinless pieces, whole)
- Turkey (breast, cutlets)
- Pork (roast, chops)
- Beef (look for roasts and steaks marked "lean")
- Other _____

Canned/jar foods

- Beans (black, garbanzo, kidney, pinto, white)
- Fruits packed in their own juice (peach and pear slices, pineapple chunks)
- Applesauce
- Tomatoes
- Spaghetti sauce
- Vegetables (carrots, corn, peas)
- Other _____

Frozen Foods

- Vegetables (no butter or sauce added)
- Fruit (no sugar added)
- Fat-free frozen yogurt
- Fruit juice bars
- 100% fruit juice concentrate
- Fish fillets (unbreaded or lightly breaded)
- Other _____

Drinks

- 100% juice
- Seltzer water
- Other _____

Miscellaneous

- Oils (olive, canola)
- Nonstick cooking spray
- Soy sauce (low-sodium)
- Mayonnaise (reduced-fat)
- Ketchup
- Mustard
- Salsa
- Nuts (almonds, cashews, pecans, walnuts, peanuts)
- Seeds (unsalted pumpkin, sunflower)
- Salad dressings (low-fat or fat-free)
- Herbs
- Spices
- Vanilla extract
- Sugar (white, brown)
- Flour (whole-wheat, all-purpose)
- Corn meal
- Soup stock (all-natural chicken, beef, vegetable)
- Baking soda
- Baking powder
- Dried fruits (raisins, cranberries, apricots)
- Peanut butter
- Jellies, jams (low-sugar)
- Honey
- Maple syrup (100%)
- Other _____

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

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