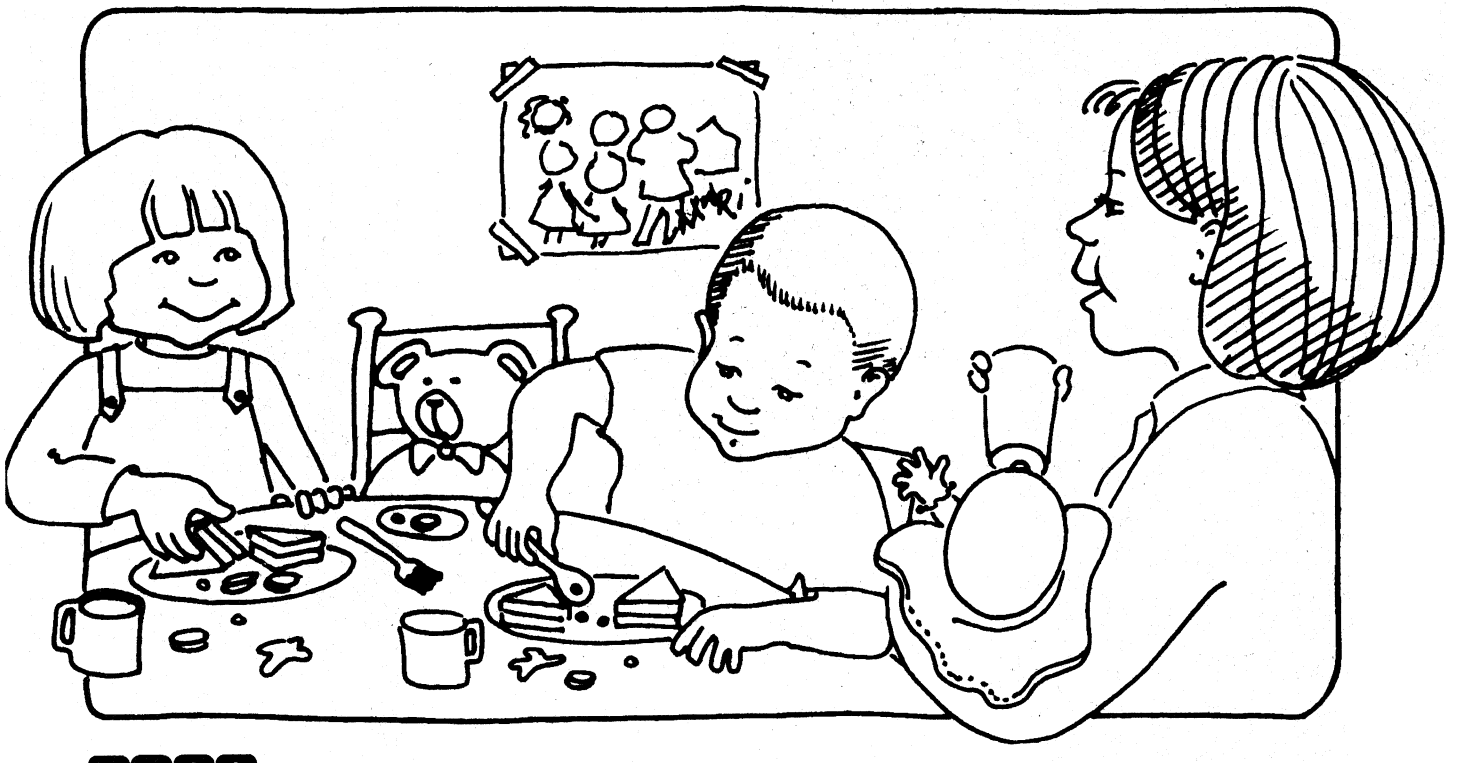
Extension Bulletin 823-C

Mealtime Magic

Snacking Is Fun For Children



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Bulletins in the *Mealtime Magic* series include:

Extension Bulletin 823-A, *Managing Mealtime Menaces*

Extension Bulletin 823-B, *Feeding The Littlest Ones: Common Sense Nutrition For Babies*

Extension Bulletin 823-C, *Snacking Is Fun For Children*

Extension Bulletin 823-D, *Meals For Munchkins*

Extension Bulletin 823-E, *Start The Day Off Right! Eating Breakfast Is Important*

Extension Bulletin 823-F, *Why Do We Eat What We Eat*

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Written by:

Karen S. Bruns, Fairfield County, Extension Agent, Home Economics

Rose Fisher Merkowitz, Highland County, Extension Agent, Home Economics, Ohio Cooperative Extension Service, The Ohio State University .

Reviewers: Kathryn Beckham, Ph.D., and Lydia Medeiros, Ph.D., R.D., Ohio Cooperative Extension Service, The Ohio State University, and Dianne Radigan, R.D., Child and Adult Care Food Program, Ohio Hunger Task Force.

Editor: Karen Wargo

Graphic Designer: Lauren Farr

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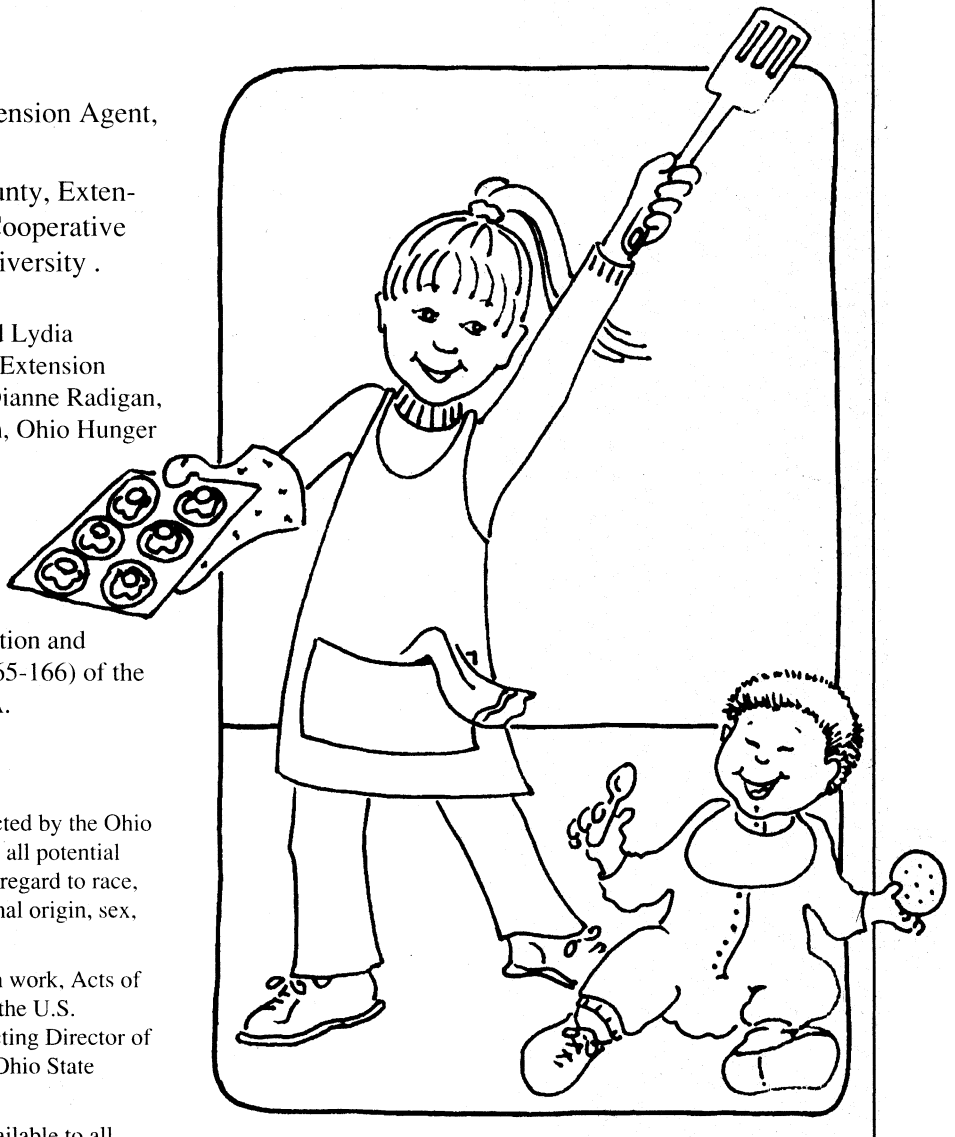


Snacking Is Fun For Children

What grows faster than a field of wild flowers in springtime and is more active than the players in a championship soccer game?

Children, of course.

To keep up with their rapid growth and high activity levels they need lots of food. In fact, infants and children need more food, pound for pound, than any other age group. But, their little tummies cannot handle too much food at any one time. What's a child-care provider to do?

Simple. Supplement healthy meals with nutritious snacks.

A snack can be many different foods: an apple, a piece of cheese, a brownie. Each food offers some nutritional value and has its place in the diet. The trick is to choose snacks that will offer the nutrients the children need without too many fat or sugar calories. Anyone can think of cookies or brownies for snacks. It takes a creative provider to think of a snack that is healthful and tasty. That brownie, while tasty, offers mainly fat and sugar calories.

Snack Choices

Make sure the snacks usually:

"Carry their weight"

Children need lots of nutrition. A "Carry-Their-Weight" snack packs lots of nutrition, but is light on fat and sugar calories. It is a healthful snack like cheese or meat cubes, small pieces of fruit, raw vegetables, cereal, juices, yogurt, or breads.

Are smaller than a regular meal

Children don't need large snacks. Too much food may prevent the children from being hungry at mealtime. Large servings also may overwhelm young children. They may react by not eating anything. This can lead to wasted food.

Are easy to handle

Children like finger foods. Crackers, raw vegetables, toast triangles, fresh fruit, or cheese slices are easy for toddlers to handle and easy for you to clean up.

Are eye-catching and fun to eat

Children like bright colors. Choose snacks like orange fruit juice cubes or red cherry tomatoes. Cut foods into fun shapes like sandwich triangles, banana rounds, carrot sticks, cucumber circles. Children can easily learn about colors and shapes while enjoying a healthful snack.

Are a break from the usual

Children like variety. For fun, try offering bean sprouts or broccoli flowerets. Offer a variety of textures for snacks: crisp raw vegetables with smooth dips, crunchy fruits and creamy puddings, tender moist meats and crunchy crackers.

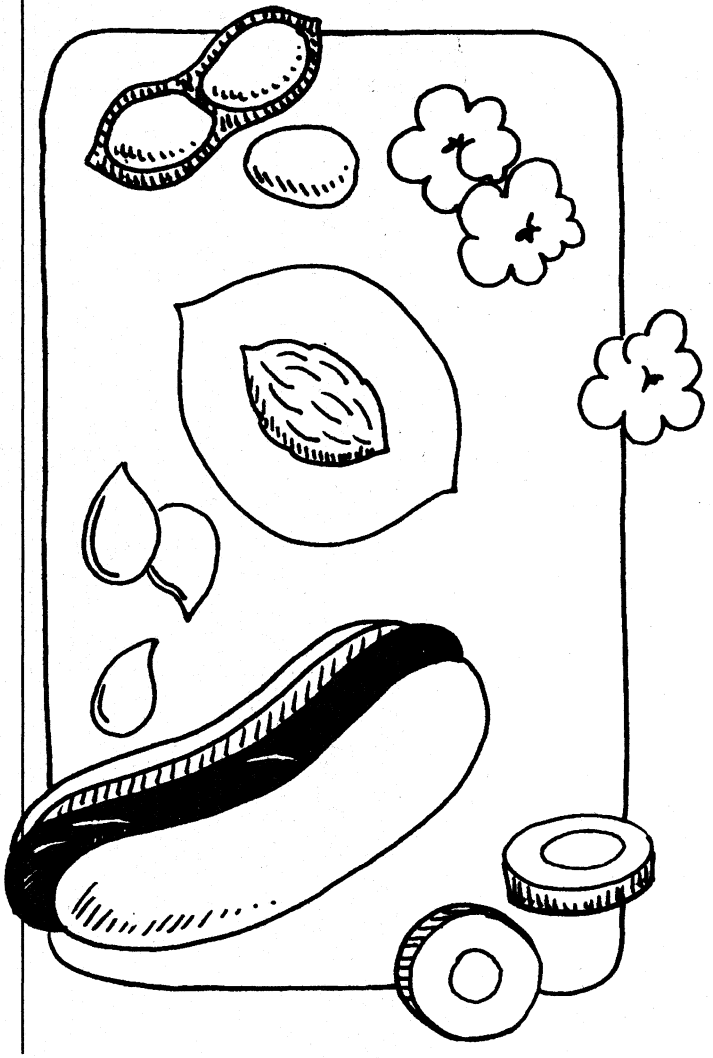
Snacking Snafus

OK, we know we want snacks to be nutritious and offer more than just calories. Is there anything else to know about snacks? Yes! Some typical snack foods can cause children to choke. Others can lead to tooth decay. Read on about snacking snafus to learn how to prevent choking and tooth decay.

Foods that can cause choking

Choking is a serious concern when caring for young children. In fact, choking kills more young children than any other home accident. Children can easily choke if a snack is eaten on the run, or if foods that are difficult for young children to eat are served. To prevent the children in your care from choking:

- Never leave the children alone while they are eating.
- Teach them to sit quietly and eat slowly.
- Serve small portions and encourage children to chew their food well.
- Grind up tough foods.
- Cut food into small pieces or thin slices.
- Be careful of round foods like hot dogs. Cut them into strips or small chunks to prevent choking.
- Take out all bones from fish, chicken, and meat.
- Take out all seeds and pits from fruits.



Some foods are more likely to cause choking than others. Beware of:

- Firm, smooth, or slippery foods that slide down the throat before chewing, like hot dogs, hard candy, peanuts, and grapes.
- Small, dry, or hard foods that are difficult to chew and easy to swallow whole, like popcorn, potato and corn chips, nuts and seeds, and small pieces of raw carrot.
- Sticky or tough foods that do not break apart easily and are hard to remove from the airway, like peanut butter, tough meats, and raisins or other dried fruit.

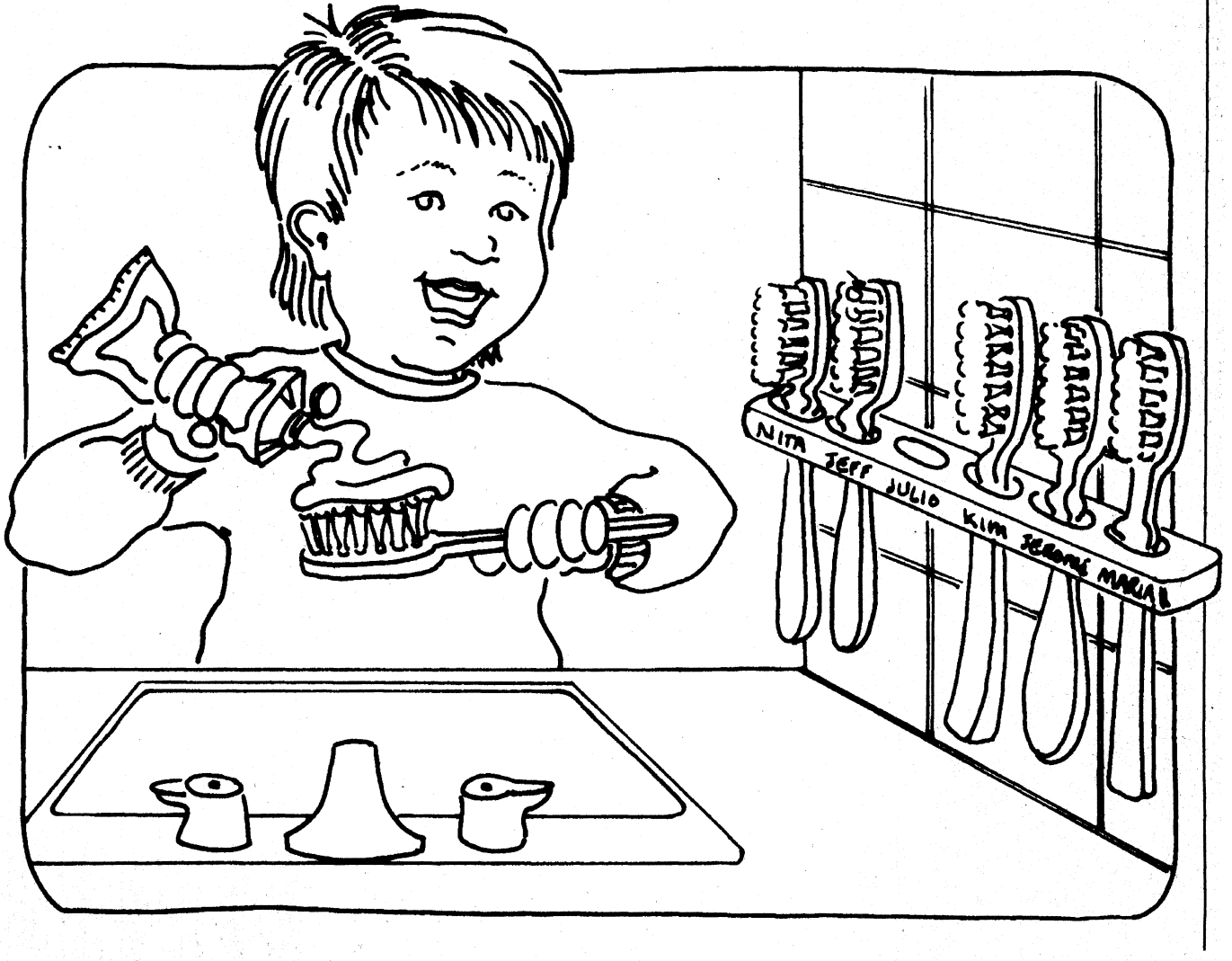
Foods that can cause tooth decay

It once was expected that people would have tooth decay, eventually lose their teeth, and need dentures. We now know that by taking a few precautions, most tooth decay, also called dental caries or cavities, can be prevented. How do cavities form?

For a cavity to form, we need a tooth with a small film of plaque on it. Even with good brushing, there is still a small amount of sticky plaque on most teeth. Bacteria, or germs, live in this sticky stuff. So plaque and germs go hand-in-hand. Then, when we eat any sweet foods, the sugar in the food gets with the germs on the teeth and forms an acid. Each time the germs and the sugar get together, they work for about 20 minutes forming acid. That acid eats away at the teeth and we get cavities. Snacking on some foods often or throughout the day can lead to tooth decay.

To help keep teeth pearly bright:

- Serve foods bacteria snub, not foods bacteria love. Bacteria love sticky sweet foods like caramels, frosting, honey, sugar, candy, cake, cookies, soft drinks, gum with sugar, and dried fruits. Bacteria snub unsweetened foods like vegetables, fruits, cheese, meat, fish, chicken, eggs, beans, breads, and cereals. (There are some sugars naturally found in fruits, juices, milk, and breads. If the children eat these foods constantly throughout the day, they also can cause cavities).
- Have the children brush often and keep the teeth as clean as possible.
- Teach the children to swish and swallow after meals or snacks. It would be great if they would brush everytime after eating. That is often not possible. The next best solution is to swish and swallow. Have the children drink a small amount of water, swish it in their mouths for a few seconds, then swallow. This will help clean the sugar off the teeth.
- Have the children brush after eating sticky sweet foods. Eating foods that are sticky sweet, like caramels, honey, or even dried fruit, is a double whammy for teeth. The sugar gets with the germs and can make acid even longer because the sugar is sticking to the teeth longer. Be sure to brush or to swish and swallow after eating sticky foods.
- Watch how often the children eat. While it is true that children need snacks each day, they do not need to eat constantly. Eating constantly, even nutritious foods bacteria usually snub, can cause cavities. Walking around with a sipper cup of juice or a bag of cereal all day means the teeth have a constant supply of food. The germs and the sugar in the food will form acid all day and the children are more likely to get cavities.



Kids In The Kitchen

Kids in the kitchen are kids who like to eat a variety of foods. Try these tasty ideas to encourage the children in your care to help in the kitchen.

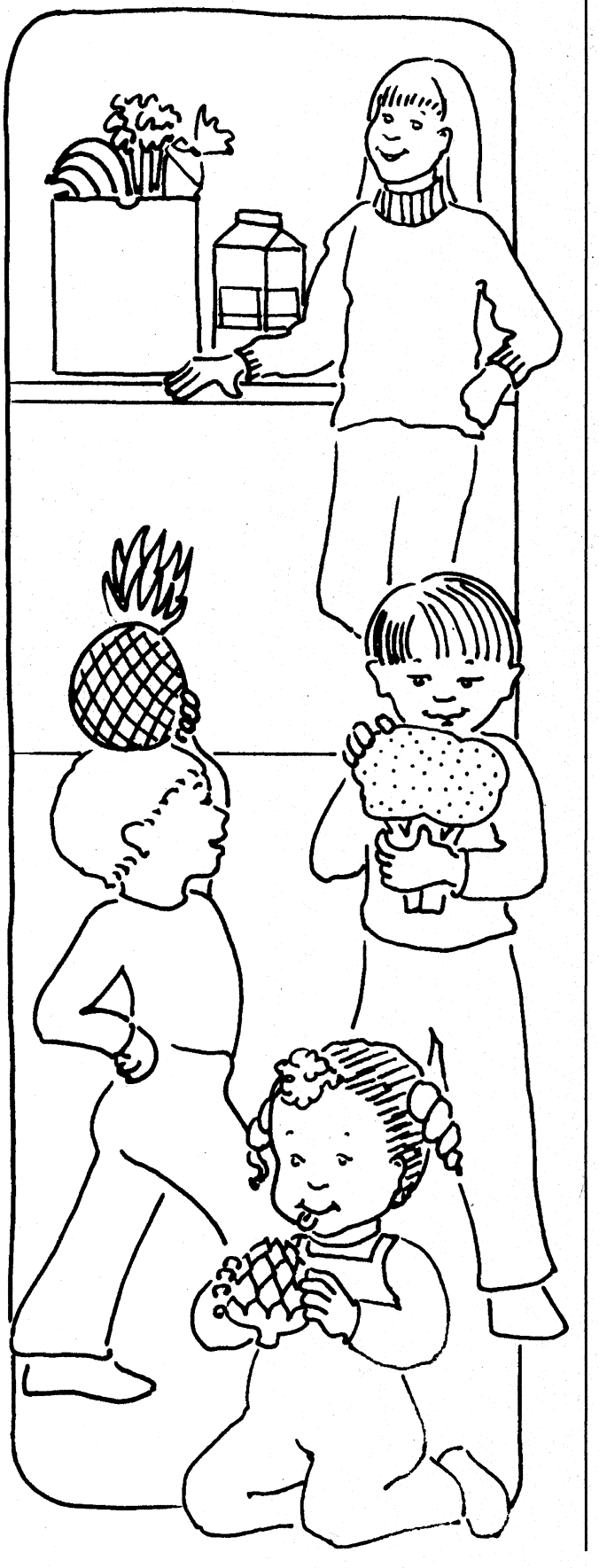
The children can:

- Help make a cottage cheese salad for each other. Show them how to place washed lettuce on salad plates. Tell the children why the lettuce must be washed. You may want to use an ice cream scoop to dip the cottage cheese onto the lettuce and then let the children sprinkle a little paprika or grated cheese on the cottage cheese.
- Put pretzel sticks in squares of cheese for a snack.
- Help make toasted cheese sandwiches. They can spread a small amount of margarine on the bread. They also can place cheese slices on the bread and top the cheese with another piece of buttered bread. You can then toast the sandwiches in a medium hot skillet.
- Help make instant pudding. Teach the children to open the package and pour the mix into a bowl. They can help measure the milk. They will enjoy pouring the milk and then stirring or beating the pudding. You may need to help a little to get out all the lumps and beat the mixture smooth.
- Wash fruit, such as apples, oranges, and grapefruit, in a sudsy solution. Teach them to rinse the fruit and dry it. Talk about the importance of washing fruit to wash off dirt and pesticides.
- Help make a combination fruit salad. They can choose fresh or canned fruits. Even young children, 2- and 3-year-olds, can cut a banana or canned peaches on a cutting board. Talk with the children about safety when using a knife. Try making the combination salad with no extra sugar. The juices from the fruit will be flavorful and more healthy.
- Help make a funny-face peach salad. They can wash lettuce leaves and pat them dry. They can lay a peach half on the lettuce. The fun part is decorating the peach like a funny face — try raisins for eyes, carrot slices for a nose, a radish slice for a mouth, cottage cheese or grated cheese for hair. Use your imagination for other foods to decorate the "funny face."

Remember, when kids help in the kitchen, the recipes should not be too difficult. And, their help is more important than a perfect product.

Fun With Food

- Take the children grocery shopping with you. Have them choose one new vegetable to try. See how many vegetables the children can name. Talk about the different shapes of the vegetables and the many different sizes. There are tiny red cranberries and huge green watermelons. There are long zucchini and short, round potatoes.
- Play store with cans of fruit. Help the children to learn the name of each fruit.
- Have a tasting party to encourage the children to try new and unusual fruits or vegetables.
- Compare the insides of fruits and vegetables. Some are layered like artichokes, onions, cabbage, and brussels sprouts. Some have small seeds, like tomatoes and green peppers; some have large seeds or pits, like peaches, nectarines, and cherries. Some are juicy, like strawberries, oranges, and melons. See how many different ways you can compare fruits and vegetables.
- Help the children make a scrapbook by cutting vegetable pictures from a seed catalog.
- Grow plants like cherry or patio tomatoes in pots. The children will enjoy watching all the stages of growth.
- Sort sweet potatoes to find animal shapes. Decorate some to look like whales, seals, dinosaurs, etc.
- 'Plant' a sweet potato in a jar of water. Cut off the top third of the sweet potato. Put toothpicks in the sides of the sweet potato so it will not touch the bottom of the jar. Then, put the sweet potato in water. Before you know it, leaves will begin to appear. Other vegetables also can be planted in a jar of water. Check a book out of the library to find out more about vegetable gardening in a glass.
- Visit a dairy farm or a dairy plant, the school kitchen, a pizza parlor, an ice cream store, a bakery, a fruit and vegetable stand, a strawberry farm, or the grocery store.
- Read a story about cows or milk to the children.
- Have the children use their ears to listen to the food while they are chewing. Compare the sounds made when crunching crackers, chewing raisins, biting into an apple, swallowing milk, chomping into a carrot, squishing a cherry tomato, tasting baby food.



Using our senses

Talk about how important food is for our bodies and how we need to eat each day. If we choose a variety of healthful foods, our bodies will be strong. We can, run, jump, play, and think well. If we don't choose healthful foods, we may get tired easily, be grumpy, and not run fast, jump high, or see well. We need to take care of our bodies.

Take large pieces of paper and lay them on the ground. Then, have one child lay down on a piece of the paper and another child use a crayon to outline the child's body on the paper. Each child should have a picture of himself or herself to decorate. They can color the pictures with crayons or markers or decorate them with pieces of fabric, scraps of wallpaper, uncooked noodles, etc. Have the children use their imaginations in their decorating. Talk about how great our bodies are:

Our eyes help us to see beautiful things. Ask the children, "What are some beautiful things you can see?"

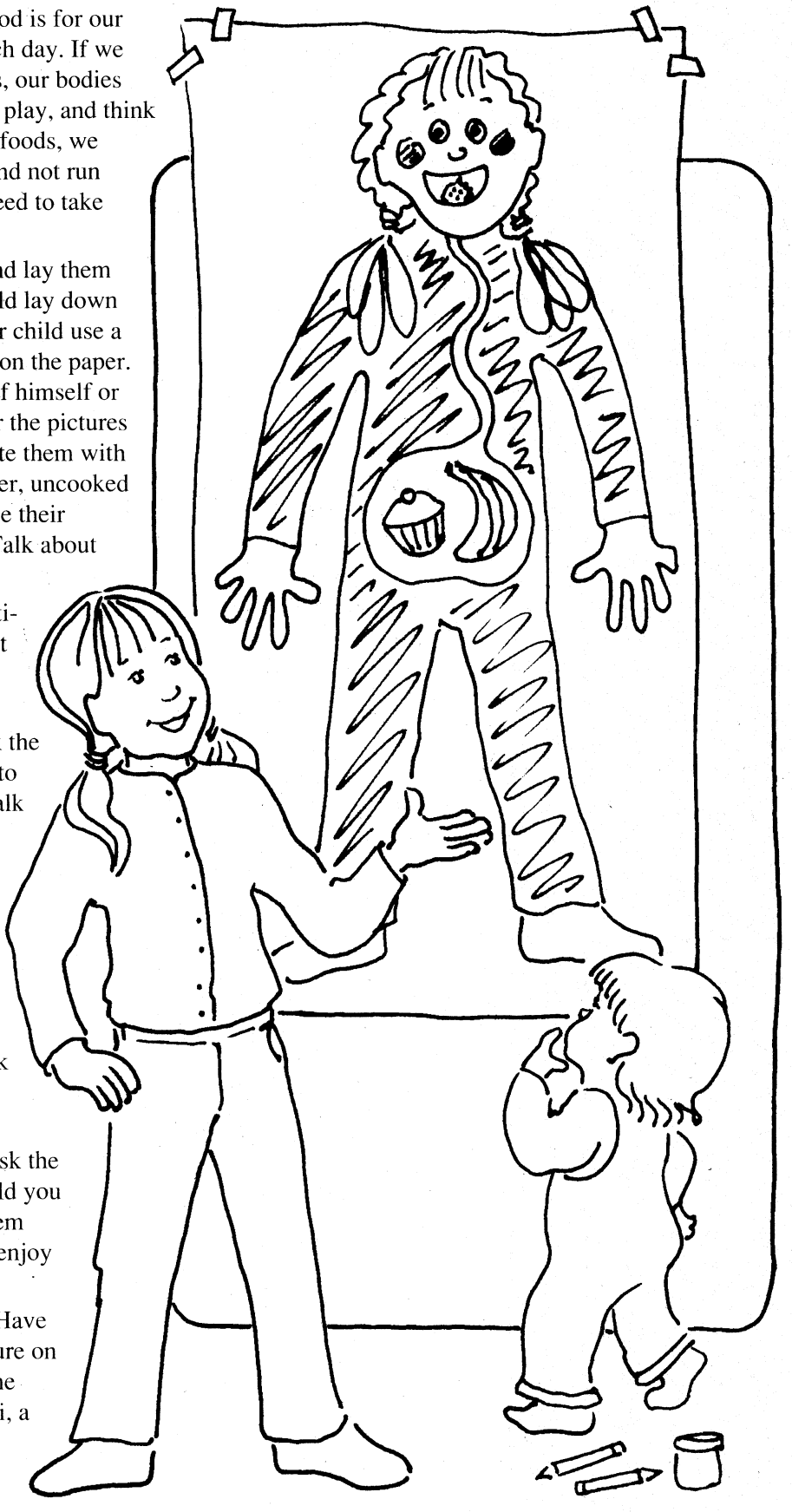
Our ears are for hearing. Ask the children to be very still and listen to the silence for one minute. Then talk about what they heard. Perhaps they heard birds chirping, a lawn mower roaring, cars passing by, people breathing.

Our nose is for smelling. Ask the children, "What are some of your favorite smells?"

Our tongue is for tasting. Ask the children, "What are some of your favorite foods?"

Our teeth are for chewing. Ask the children, "What type of foods could you eat if you had no teeth?" Have them chew a crunchy apple slowly and enjoy the taste and the sound.

Our hands are for touching. Have the children feel the different texture on some fruits and vegetables. Feel the difference in a fuzzy peach or kiwi, a smooth apple, a bumpy potato, a scratchy coconut....



Tried And True Tummy Pleasers

Fruit Juice Cubes

1 1/2 tablespoons unflavored gelatin

3/4 cup water

6 ounces frozen or juice concentrate (grape, apple, orange, or pineapple)

1. Wash hands.
2. Very lightly grease a 9 x 5-inch loaf pan or plastic ice cube tray.
3. Mix the gelatin and the water in a small saucepan. Let the gelatin soften for 5 minutes.
4. Heat the mixture over low heat, stirring constantly, until the gelatin dissolves.
5. Remove from the heat.
6. Add the fruit juice concentrate. Mix well. Pour into the pan or tray.
7. Cover and refrigerate until set.
8. Cut into 1-inch cubes. Store the cubes, covered, in the refrigerator.

This recipe serves 6 children.

One serving counts as a fruit.

Cheese Dip

1 cup creamed lowfat cottage cheese

1 teaspoon instant beef bouillon granules

1 teaspoon instant minced onion

1 teaspoon lemon juice

1. Wash hands.
2. Blend all ingredients with an electric mixer or a blender until smooth.
3. Serve chilled with raw vegetables or crackers.

One serving counts as a meat for a snack.

Carrot Cocktail

Pineapple juice

Carrot sticks

1. Wash hands.
2. Soak the carrot sticks in the pineapple juice in the refrigerator for one hour or more.
3. Eat and enjoy a refreshing, crunchy snack.

One serving counts as a vegetable.

Yogurt Shake

1 cup yogurt

1 cup juice (orange, apple, pineapple)

1 banana

1 tablespoon honey

1/8 teaspoon nutmeg or cinnamon

12 ice cubes

1. Wash hands.
2. Combine all ingredients in a blender.
3. Blend until frothy.

This recipe serves 4 children.

One serving counts as a meat and a fruit for a snack.

Rocket Salad

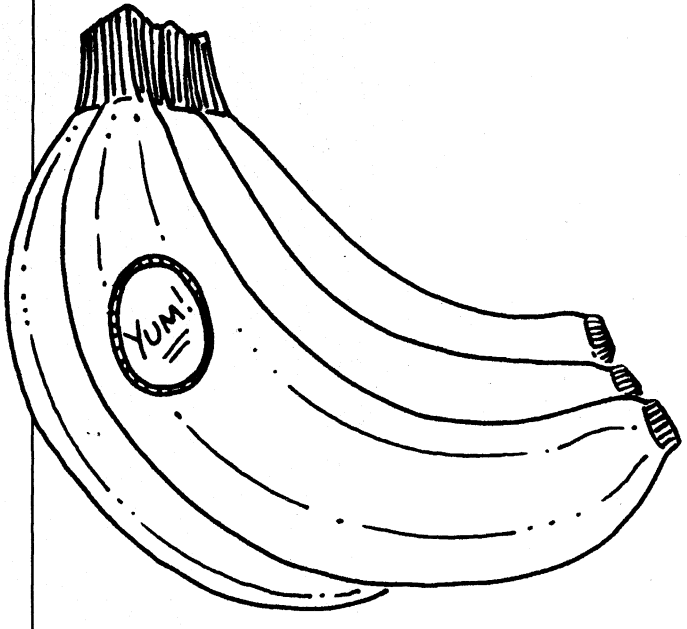
For each serving, place a crisp lettuce leaf on a salad plate.

Launching pad: 1 slice pineapple. Lay on top of lettuce leaf.

Rocket: 1/2 peeled banana. Place it upright in the center of the pineapple

Nose Cone: 1/2 cherry fastened to the top of the banana with a toothpick.

One serving counts as a fruit.



Frozen Banana Treats

4 yellow bananas, peeled, and cut in half crosswise

1/2 cup peanut butter

1 cup crushed breakfast cereal, vanilla wafers, or chocolate cookies

1. Wash hands.
2. Gently "frost" bananas with peanut butter.
3. Roll the frosted bananas in crushed cereal or cookies and wrap each in waxed paper.
4. Freeze for 3 hours and serve.

One serving counts as a fruit and a meat for a snack.

Cheesy Twists

2 cups baking mix (like Bisquick or Jiffy)

1/2 cup shredded cheddar cheese

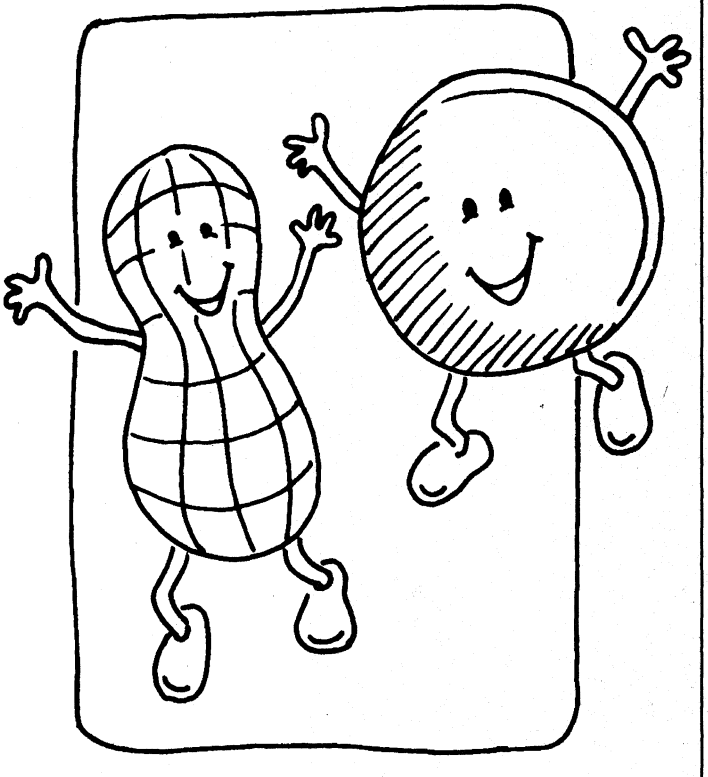
1/2 cup cold water

1 tablespoon margarine

1. Wash hands.
2. Preheat oven to 425 degrees.
3. Mix baking mix, cheese, and water just until a soft dough forms.
4. Beat 20 strokes.
5. Pinch off a small ball of dough.
6. Roll the dough into a stick shape.
7. Twist the ends of the sticks in opposite directions.
8. Place the twists on an ungreased cookie sheet.
9. Press the ends onto the cookie sheet.
10. Brush with melted margarine and sprinkle with caraway seeds or poppy seeds, if you wish.
11. Bake until light brown, about 10 minutes.

This recipe serves 8 children.

One serving counts as a bread for any meal or snack.



Dottie Bars

2 cups raisins

1 teaspoon vanilla

2 cups brown sugar, packed

1/4 cup margarine

3/4 cup crunchy peanut butter

3 cups quick-cooking oatmeal

1/2 cup evaporated milk

1. Wash hands.
2. In a large bowl, stir together the raisins, peanut butter and vanilla.
3. Add oatmeal and set aside.
4. In a saucepan, boil together brown sugar, evaporated milk, and margarine for one minute.
5. Pour this mixture over the oat mixture and stir until well mixed.
6. Pour the mixture into a greased 15 x 10 x 1- inch pan.
7. Refrigerate for 1 hour and then cut into squares.

One serving counts as a bread.

Frozen Bread Treats

1 loaf of frozen bread dough

Filling ingredients, choose one:

Apple-raisin filling:

2 cup chopped apples, 1/4 cup raisins, 1/2 teaspoon cinnamon, 1/2 cup brown sugar.

Date-orange filling:

1 cup chopped dates, 1/2 cup concentrated frozen orange juice, thawed, 1/2 cup sugar. Cook the dates, orange juice concentrate, and sugar until the dates are soft. Cool.

Cheese filling:

2 cups grated cheese, 3 ounces cream cheese, 1/2 cup plain yogurt. Soften the cream cheese. Stir in the grated cheese and yogurt.

1. Wash hands.
2. Take the bread out of the freezer and place it in a greased 9-inch cake pan.
3. Lightly grease the top and sides of the loaf.
4. Cover it with a piece of plastic wrap. Thaw the bread at room temperature until it is doubled in bulk. It will get twice as big. If you will be using the bread in the morning, you can thaw it overnight. If you will be using the bread in the afternoon or evening, take it out in the morning.
5. When it is thawed and doubled, punch it down.
6. Place it on a clean counter.
7. Roll the bread out until it measures about 9 inches by 15 inches.
8. Spread the filling you made on the bread.
9. Roll the bread, like a jelly roll. Slice the roll into 3/4-inch slices.
10. Place the rolls in the greased cake pan.
11. Cover with a clean towel and let rise about 1 hour in a warm spot. The rolls should rise until they are about doubled in bulk again.
12. Bake at 375 degrees for 15 to 20 minutes.

This recipes counts as a bread.

Meal Pattern Requirements

	AGE (years)		
Breakfast	**1-3**	**3-6**	**6-12**
Milk, Fluid	1/2 cup	3/4 cup	1 cup
Veg. +/or Fruit or Juice	1/4 cup	1/2 cup	1/2 cup
Cereal/Bread Alternate	1/3 oz. 1/2 sl.	1/2 oz. 1/2 sl.	1 oz. 1 sl.
Lunch			
Milk, Fluid	1/2 cup	3/4 cup	1 cup
Meat/Alternate	1 oz.	1 1/2 oz.	2 oz.
Bread/Alternate	1/2 sl.	1/2 sl.	1 sl.
Veg./Fruit Veg./Fruit	2 SERVINGS TO TOTAL: 1/4 cup	1/2 cup	3/4 cup
Supper			
Milk, Fluid	1/2 cup	3/4 cup	1 cup
Meat/Alternate	1 oz.	1 1/2 oz.	2 oz.
Bread/Alternate	1/2 sl.	1/2 sl.	1 sl.
Veg./Fruit Veg./Fruit	2 SERVINGS TO TOTAL: 1/4 cup	1/2 cup	3/4 cup
Snack: Choose 2 of these 4			
Milk, Fluid	1/2 cup	1/2 cup	1 cup
Veg./Fruit	1/2 cup	1/2 cup	3/4 cup
Bread/Alternate	1/2 sl.	1/2 sl.	1 sl.
Meat/Alternate	1/2 oz.	1/2 oz.	1 oz.

For a snack do not serve milk and juice together or 2 foods from the same group.