

Pick a better snack™

# FAMILY NEWSLETTER



## Eating Out: How to Make a Healthy Choice

Eating out can be a fun thing to do with your family! Whether going to a sit-down restaurant or picking up takeout, you can enjoy eating out while still making healthier choices.

Usually there are options for sides with the main meal. Choose vegetables, fruit, or cottage cheese rather than a fried item, like french fries.

Beverages are another place where you can make a healthier choice. Many kids' meals have an option of milk, rather than soda. If juice is a choice, ask if it is 100% juice. Water is always an option at a restaurant as well!

Table menus and menu boards list the calories for each item in most restaurants. Compare your favorites for the right choice for you.

The next time you eat out, check out all the options before you order and enjoy a night of no cooking.



# Fuel your fun.

Eat fruits and veggies.



## Earth Day

This month, we're encouraging you to get active while helping the earth! Pick up trash at a local park, plant a garden, or go on a scavenger hunt finding different kinds of plants in your neighborhood. Post your Earth Day activity on social media and tag #PlayYourWay so we can share what you've done!



## Parts of the Plant

In *Pick a better snack™*, students learn the parts of the plant that we eat. For example, potatoes are the roots, broccoli is a flower, strawberries are the fruit, and beans are the seeds.

This month, students learned about stems. What are stems that we eat? Yes! Asparagus, celery, and rhubarb are all stems that we eat.

Next time you eat a vegetable, ask your child what part of the plant it is. It's a fun way to learn science.



## SNAP Online Shopping

Did you know? If you have an SNAP/EBT card you can now use it to buy groceries online at Amazon and Walmart. Amazon will deliver to all Iowa zip codes. You can purchase from Walmart online if they offer online groceries in your area. Visit your specific Walmart store's website or call (800) 924-9206 to determine if online grocery is available where you live. Benefits will not cover service or delivery fees.



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## Feeding Picky Eaters

Many families have a picky eater, which can make mealtimes a struggle! However, it's still important to serve your family a variety of foods to help them get the nutrients they need to fully develop and thrive.

But how do you get your picky eater to try something new? Here are some ideas:

- ◆ Ask your child to help in meal prep! This will create excitement in the meal, and they will be more willing to try it.
- ◆ Make fun shapes out of your food or create things like smiley faces with condiments.
- ◆ Start with a small helping of the food they don't want to eat.
- ◆ Model good behaviors. Your child does follow what they see.
- ◆ Don't give up after one attempt with a new food.



Stay positive with your picky eater during this process. It will help to create a safer environment to try new things.

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## Do It Together!

Fitting in time for physical activity doesn't have to feel like a chore! Exercising with a friend or family member makes movement fun! Find an "exercise buddy" to do an at home activity. Lots of ideas are available at <https://www.hy-veekidsfit.com/monthly-challenge>.



## How to Prepare Broccoli and Cauliflower

**Wash:** Rinse cauliflower or broccoli under running water. Don't use soap.

**Cut:** Remove the cauliflower leaves and cut away the large stem. Cut off the florets into bite-size pieces. Broccoli is similar. Cut off the stem and florets. The stem can be peeled and cut into bite-size pieces too.

**Refrigerate:** Store what you don't eat in the refrigerator for 3-5 days.



These tips are adapted from Iowa State University's Spend Smart. Eat Smart.®

## We Can Help

Good food is important for the health and well-being of your family. Sometimes it can be hard to buy the foods you want your family to eat. Many resources exist to help children and families eat well. The We Can Help brochure lists food and nutrition resources—like recipes, school meals, summer meals, and nutrition apps.

Check it out: <https://hhs.iowa.gov/inn>.





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## Kids In The Kitchen

Kids love to help. Getting them involved with meal or snack preparation is one way to get your child to try a new food. There are many tasks children can assist with in the kitchen, depending on their age, ability to follow directions, and your comfort level. All ages can help with the menu, such as selecting the vegetable or snack.

5 – 7 year olds can:

- ◆ Wash fruits and vegetables (*small amounts at a time*)
- ◆ Mix, mash, sprinkle
- ◆ Cut with blunt scissors or lettuce knives
- ◆ Measure
- ◆ Set the table, clear their own plate

8 – 9 year olds can:

- ◆ Use a can opener
- ◆ Chop, slice, dice (*with round tip knives and supervision*)
- ◆ Add seasonings
- ◆ Read recipes
- ◆ Wash dishes



As your child helps with the meal, you may find that they eat a wider variety of foods, and meals become more relaxing. Also, your child will grow up with confidence to prepare their own meals.

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## Protect Your Heart!

February is National Heart Month! Even if it's cold outside, there are plenty of ways to get active indoors. Visit the American Heart Association for fun ideas to get your heart pumping in the comfort of your own home!  
<https://www.heart.org/en/healthy-living/fitness/getting-active/25-ways-to-get-moving-at-home-infographic>



## Bell Peppers

**Select:** Choose firm, shiny peppers with skin that is tight and unwrinkled. Avoid cracks or black spots.

**Store:** Refrigerate peppers in a plastic bag and use within 5 days.

**Wash:** Rinse peppers under cool running water right before eating or cutting them.

**Eat:** Try them raw, or dice and add to quesadillas, pasta, omelets, pizza, or a stir fry.

These tips are adapted from Iowa State University's Spend Smart. Eat Smart.®



## Your Life Iowa

Everyone needs help sometimes. If you or a loved one are facing problems with alcohol, drugs, gambling, mental health or suicidal thoughts, one resource you can turn to is Your Life Iowa. Free and confidential help and information is available 24/7 by phone (855) 581-8111, by text (855) 895-8398 or online chat at [yourlifeiowa.org](http://yourlifeiowa.org), so you can talk, text or chat with someone right away. If you're not sure if you're at risk, check out the warning signs and "Am I at risk?" quizzes for alcohol, drugs, gambling, and mental health. No judgment. Just help.



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## Family Meals Can Be Fun!

Most families want to eat together regularly but only one-third are able to achieve this goal. Work schedules, school activities, and living situations are a few things that make it difficult. Here are a few tips to get started:

- ◆ Commit to 1 or 2 meals a week (breakfast on Sunday or dinner on Thursday).
- ◆ Keep meals simple. Make extra for another meal.
- ◆ Turn off electronics and focus on each other.
- ◆ Sit at the table, even if there are only two of you, and talk.

Besides developing healthy eating habits, children will benefit from family meals in other ways:

- ◆ A closer relationship with their parents
- ◆ Better academic performance and self-esteem
- ◆ Less likely to have behavioral issues or engage in other risk taking behaviors such as drug, alcohol, or tobacco use when they get older

By taking small steps to get started, you might find family meals become more frequent in your home!



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## New Year, New You!

The beginning of the year is a great time to re-focus on wellness. Through the 5-2-1-0 Healthy Choices Count! program, you and your family can learn how to set realistic goals to improve your health. Learn more about the program and access free resources by visiting: [www.iowahealthieststate.com/5210](http://www.iowahealthieststate.com/5210).



## Mangoes

- ◆ You may notice different types of mangoes at the store. Try them to see which you like best.
- ◆ A ripe mango will give slightly when you squeeze it. Color is not a good judge of ripeness.
- ◆ You can leave an unripe mango on the counter for a few days to ripen it. Put it in a paper sack to speed up the process.
- ◆ Mangoes are easy to eat once you learn how to cut them: [www.mango.org/how-to-cut-a-mango/](http://www.mango.org/how-to-cut-a-mango/).



## Spend Smart Eat Smart

Iowa State University Extension and Outreach created **Spend Smart. Eat Smart.**® (SSES) to help you eat well on a budget. SSES is a website and a free mobile app. You can find recipes, videos for preparing foods, nutrition information as well as tips for buying and storing foods. There's also help for being more active. You can create your own physical activity plan and participate in at-home video workouts. Try it today at [www.spendsmart.extension.iastate.edu](http://www.spendsmart.extension.iastate.edu).





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## Worry Less at Mealtimes

"My daughter eats like a bird." "Our son won't eat any vegetables." These are some of the concerns parents voice about their children.

So what is a parent to do? Nutrition experts agree that it's best to follow the Satter Division of Responsibility in Feeding. Your feeding job is to provide regular meals and snacks that include a variety of foods. After that, it's your child's job to decide what and how much to eat. This takes practice and can be hard, but in the long run, your child will eat the right amounts and learn to like many different foods.

Children watch what their adults eat, so setting a positive example as often as possible will help them develop good habits. Adults can learn from children too! Through the *Pick a better snack™* program, your child has the opportunity to try new fruits and vegetables. Allow them to introduce it to you—you might end up finding a new favorite food!

For more information about feeding and about practical ways to have family meals, see <https://www.elynsatterinstitute.org/>.



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## Spring Into Action!

With the weather getting warmer, this is a great time to get back into healthy habits outdoors. Plan nightly bike rides or walks after dinner as a family to connect with one another and improve your health. Find a trail near you by visiting [www.traillink.com/state/ia-trails/](http://www.traillink.com/state/ia-trails/).



## Crazy for Citrus Fruits

**Oranges.** Peel and eat. Or, cut the orange in half lengthwise and each half into 3 or 4 wedges. Then remove the peel with your hands or just bite off the juicy fruit.

**Clementines.** Peel—they are usually easier to peel than oranges—and eat. Kids can do this!

**Grapefruit.** Cut in half and scoop out each section with a spoon. You may have to cut around each section first. Or, cut the grapefruit into wedges and then cut off the peel.



## Healthy Choices Count!

5-2-1-0 helps you remember health goals for your child each day:

- ◆ 5 or more fruits and vegetables
- ◆ 2 hours or less of recreational screen time
- ◆ 1 hour or more of physical activity
- ◆ 0 sugary drinks; drink more water



Change is hard and setbacks are normal. You likely won't reach your goal every day. Pick one area and start small. Can you serve a fruit at snacktime? Can you play outside with your child? Find more ideas at [www.iowahealthieststate.com/5210](http://www.iowahealthieststate.com/5210).

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## Be a Mindful Eater

With our busy schedules, it can be easy to eat on the go or hurry through a meal. We often eat while working, driving or in front of a screen. There is a better way!

Food is not just fuel for your body; it should be savored and satisfying. Being a mindful eater makes you aware of the food you put into your body, how it tastes and how it makes you feel.

Some ways you and your family can practice mindful eating are:

- ◆ Slow down when eating your food.
- ◆ Notice the smell, taste, and texture of food.
- ◆ Have technology-free meals—no phones or TV.
- ◆ Recognize when you are full; eat when you are hungry.
- ◆ Avoid multitasking when eating.

Healthy eating is not just what you eat but also how you eat.

Adapted from <https://www.uwhealth.org/treatments/nutrition-wellness>.



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## Hydration Challenge

Summer months mean more fun in the sun! Through the **Play Your Way** campaign, we've encouraged you to be active for 60 minutes every day. We sweat more while playing outside in the heat, which means we should be drinking more water! Challenge yourself to 1 hour of physical activity and at least 1 liter of water every day to stay healthy and hydrated all summer long!



## Berries

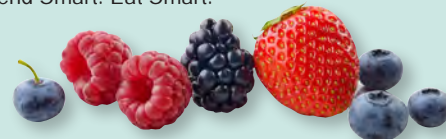
**Select:** Choose berries that are firm, plump, and rich in color. Avoid berries that are shriveled or wet.

**Store:** Refrigerate berries in a ventilated container. Raspberries will keep only 1-2 days, strawberries for up to 3 days, and blueberries up to one week.

**Wash:** Rinse berries under cool running water right before eating. Don't rinse before refrigerating.

**Eat:** Berries taste great fresh by themselves, or add them to yogurt, a smoothie or lettuce salad.

These tips are adapted from Iowa State University's Spend Smart. Eat Smart.®



## Summer Meals

Free lunches are served to children age 18 and under in most communities during the summer. Many locations also have fun activities, like gardening, crafts and games, that your kids can do before or after they eat. To find a meal site near you, text "Food" or "Comida" (for Spanish) to 304-304 or visit [www.fns.usda.gov/summerfoodrocks](http://www.fns.usda.gov/summerfoodrocks).





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## Is There Really Junk Food?

Cookies, chips, candy, soda. These are often labeled as “junk foods.” Labeling foods as junk or bad can contribute to less desirable eating behaviors.

“You can have some chips when you eat half your sandwich first.” A value is being placed on one food over another. Rather than placing emphasis on certain foods, try leveling the playing field so that all foods fit.

If your family enjoys a little sweet treat at the end of a meal, let your child have a portion, say one cookie, no matter what is left on the plate. You’re treating the cookie just like the rest of the meal.

Yes, some foods have more nutrients than others, but all foods can fit in, especially when we do our best to include a wide variety of foods.



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## Stretch and De-Stress!

The holiday season can be a stressful time for many. Oftentimes, when we feel stressed, our kids do as well. Practicing yoga and deep breathing can be fun ways to cope with busy schedules during this time. Here are yoga exercise resources for you and your family to enjoy: [www.youtube.com/user/CosmicKidsYoga](http://www.youtube.com/user/CosmicKidsYoga).



## PLAY YOUR WAY!

one hour a day!



## All Forms Count

In *Pick a better snack™*, we talk about eating fruits and vegetables in different forms. That means that there are many ways you can enjoy fruits and vegetables: fresh, canned, frozen, dried, and juice.

You can buy cranberries in any form. Generally it's best to choose options without added sugars and salt, but it's most important that you and your family just eat fruits and vegetables. How will you eat cranberries this month?



## WIC

WIC is a program for families with babies and children under age 5 as well as pregnant women and women who recently had a baby. To find a WIC clinic near you, go to [www.signupwic.com](http://www.signupwic.com). Eligible families will receive healthy foods, nutrition education, breastfeeding support, and referrals to other health care professionals. WIC is a great place to get help feeding your children.



<https://hhs.iowa.gov/inn/pick-a-better-snack>

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## Stretching Your Food Dollar

Feeding a family can be expensive. You can feed your family healthy meals, while staying within your budget. Here are a few tips to keep you on track:

- ◆ Plan your weekly meals ahead of time. Include the foods you have in your cupboards and plan to use leftovers.
- ◆ Make a grocery list and stick to it. Include items on sale.
- ◆ Buy “in season” fruits and vegetables and compare the price to frozen or canned.
- ◆ Rice and pasta are budget-friendly grain options—try to make half of your grains whole grains. Check the ingredient list on the food label; the first ingredient should say whole grain or whole wheat.
- ◆ Beans, lentils, and eggs are protein foods that cost less. You can add them to a variety of recipes.

Find other tips and budget friendly recipes at [www.ChooseMyPlate.gov](http://www.ChooseMyPlate.gov).



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## Move for Immunity!

Did you know physical activity boosts your immune system? That means if we exercise daily, we're less likely to get sick! Aim for 1 hour of physical activity a day to boost your body's germ-fighting ability in addition to eating fruits and vegetables.



## PLAY YOUR WAY!

one hour a day!



## How to Prepare Jicama

- 1 Wash jicama under running water.
- 2 Use a sharp paring knife or vegetable peeler to remove the skin.
- 3 Cut it in half to make it easier to handle.
- 4 Cut it into sticks, slices, or small cubes depending on how you'll eat it. It can also be shredded.
- 5 Once it's cut, refrigerate what you don't use in a covered container for up to one week.



## Farm to School

Do you wish your kids would eat more fruits and vegetables? Farm to School can help! When kids have a hand in growing fruits and vegetables, they are more likely to eat them. Farm to school can make school meals more attractive and tastier, too.

Celebrate National Farm to School Month by helping with your school garden or connecting a farmer to the school. With farm to school, students win, farmers win, and communities win.





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## Is Snacking OK For My Family?

Having a snack in between a meal is perfectly acceptable! Snacks help kids get the nutrients and energy they need to grow and stay active. Most kids need to eat every 3-4 hours. Plan for snacks to keep kids from grazing all day long and ruining their appetite at mealtime.

Keep healthier snacks on hand, such as fresh fruit and veggies, low-fat cheese sticks, whole grain crackers, or low-fat yogurt. Create spaces in your cupboards or refrigerators that are designated spots for a healthy grab- and- go snack.

In the *Pick a better snack™* program, your child will learn about a variety of fruits and vegetables and how to eat them for a snack or at a meal. Have a fun conversation with your child about what they learned and try the featured fruit or vegetable as a family. You may just find a new favorite snack!



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## Unplug to Have More Fun!

This September, we're focusing on reducing our screen-time! What's your favorite non-screen activity? Aim for 2 or less hours a day in front of a TV, smart phone, or tablet device. Learn more at: [www.iowahealthieststate.com/5210](http://www.iowahealthieststate.com/5210).



## How to Pick a Good Cantaloupe

**Color:** The outside should be golden with a flat, yellowish spot, which means it ripened on the vine.

**Firmness:** The ends of the melon should yield slightly when gently pressed. There should be no soft spots or cracks.

**Smell:** It should smell good, like cantaloupe.

**Weight:** It should feel heavy for its size when compared to other cantaloupe.



## Double Your Money

**Double Up Food Bucks™** helps SNAP/EBT participants buy more fruits and vegetables. When you use your EBT card to buy fruits and vegetables at participating farmers markets and grocery stores, you'll receive **FREE Double Up Food Bucks™** to buy more produce. Every dollar you spend is matched up to \$10 per day. Find a location near you at [www.DoubleUpIowa.org](http://www.DoubleUpIowa.org).

