



March 2022 Newsletter

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Heart Health for Kids It's Important!

By Tina Haney, Family and Consumer Science Agent, Gunnison County

Is heart health and exercise as important for kids as it is for adults?

Absolutely! So, how do you promote heart health with children? Teaching the importance of healthy eating, *including healthy snacks*, and participating in physical activities from a very young age will help children continue those beneficial habits into adulthood.



According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), the combination of unhealthy eating habits and a lack of physical activity is common among U.S. youth. These behaviors are both strong risk actors for developing heart disease. The sooner you start teaching children healthy habits, the better.

All too often kids (and adults) will grab snacks that are loaded with sugar, fat and salt, instead of something more nutritious when they are hungry. Help your family choose delicious and nutritious snacks to support a healthy heart.

Heart Healthy Snacks



Snacks such as fruits or vegetables are always a good choice. They're high in nutrients and without added sugar, fat and salt. Keep pre-cut fruits and vegetables stocked in your refrigerator. Also, include some high protein snack choices such as string cheese, hard-boiled eggs, nuts or nut butter. If your child wants something crunchy, steer them towards fiber rich whole grain crackers or popcorn.

Tips for teaching kids about healthy snacks:

- Go to the store together and stock up on favorite healthy snacks
- Let them help you make healthy snacks
- Give children a choice between two healthy snacks
- Read children's books about healthy eating. Here is a suggestion to get you started. "Comiendo el Arcoiris - Eating the Rainbow: A Bilingual Spanish English Book for Learning Food and Colors", by Patricia Berrera Boyer.

Ceci, a young bilingual girl, likes to eat only a few plain foods. Her Grandmother makes a brilliant suggestion to try eating a rainbow. Surprised by this strange recommendation, Ceci learns how it's done as her Grandmother takes her to the store and shows her all the colorful possibilities available to her. Ceci expands her palate and appreciates her Grandmother's wisdom.

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Tips for teaching kids about physical activity:

Along with healthy eating, comes the importance of physical activity. This valuable life skill can start in early childhood and continue into adulthood. Helping kids understand what exercise does for their heart health is important.



- Encourage children to find an activity that will get their heart pumping! It might be sports, hiking or riding a bike. How about dance or karate? Give jumping rope a try! Anything that's fun and gets your heart pumping is great.
- Teach children about how the heart works. There are several books about the heart for children, or show them a fun video about how the heart works: <https://kidshealth.org/en/kids/heart.html>

Jumping Rope!

Jumping rope is an inexpensive activity to get the heart pumping. It's also something the whole family can do together! You can jump rope almost anywhere - outside, the driveway, the sidewalk, the basement in your house. Really, anywhere that has a smooth surface to jump on will work.

Fitting a jump rope for your child is important so they get the best benefit out of its use. To fit anyone for a rope (child or adult), have them stand on the middle of the rope and pull both ends up towards the sky. The tips of the rope should reach the height of their armpits. Anything shorter will prevent the rope from hitting the ground under their feet when jumping.

There are so many fun rhymes to say while jumping rope. Maybe your family could even make some new rhymes together!



Benefits of jumping rope:

- Gets your heart pumping
- Improves balance and coordination
- Can be done alone, with a friend, or with a group
- IT'S FUN

Let's Talk

Work together to make healthy choices as a family. The more you include children in the process of making and eating healthy foods and planning fun ways to stay active, the more likely they are to continue these behaviors into adulthood. These choices will help their heart stay healthy for years to come. You are your child's best role model, so eat healthy and get moving yourself. You will all receive the benefits!

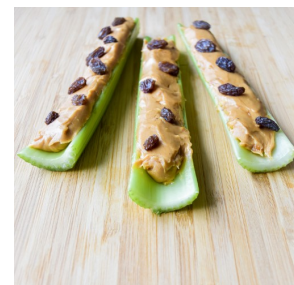
Recipe for Health Ants on a Log

Ingredients:

- 3 celery stalks
- 2 tablespoons of peanut butter
- 1/2 cup of raisins

Directions:

- Wash hands and food contact surfaces with soap and water.
- Rinse and dry celery stalks.
- Trim the ends of the celery stalks and cut into 3-4 inch sections.
- Spread peanut butter into celery stalk sections.
- Top peanut butter with raisins.



This is one of the best healthy snacks for kids, as it delivers a solid burst of protein, along with dietary fiber and a number of minerals from the raisins.