

How and When to Choose a Sport for Your Child

Physical activity for your child is very important. There are many ways to insure that children get the physical activity they need. Up until the age of four, most children prefer free play and do not have skills needed to throw and catch. And until about age 8, most children are not ready for structured sports. They have not yet developed an

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understanding for rules, nor do they understand the concept of teamwork. But after that time, organized sports may be an option. There are some cautions, however for parents.

When it is time to choose a sport, let your child try a variety—not all at once, of course. Trying swimming in the summer and basketball in the winter or hip-hop classes in the fall provides variety. Let your child know that he/she can drop out if he/she does not enjoy it, but he/she should agree to give the sport a reasonable chance. A month or two allows your child to develop some new skills that can make that sport rewarding. Going from swim team in the summer to basketball in the winter and hip-hop classes here and there is a good idea. Specializing in one sport is better left to the teen years.

Some sports are better than others for certain children. For

example, a child with ADD may do poorly with baseball. The long periods of inactivity between plays makes it difficult for the child to maintain focus. When the ball comes to the outfield, he/she may be looking the other way and fidgeting or daydreaming. Soccer or karate, with more sustained activity, may be better.

The child who is not terribly coordinated may do better in a sport that pits the player against him/herself. Swimming and track, for example, allow a child to strive to better his own record rather than worry about making a goal or a home run for the team.

Remember at all times that winning is the least important part of children's sports. Enjoying the physical activity, learning to work together, developing social skills to cope with both winning and losing, and feeling good about themselves are the goals.

Parents should remember that their role is as a supporter and a fan. Parents must also remember

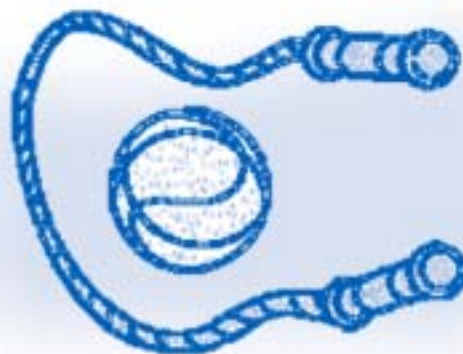


that the game is for the children's socialization and learning about teamwork.

Closely monitoring other adults who are coaching, watching for positive interactions is an important role for a parent. Also, it is critical for parents to keep personal control while being supportive of children. Never shame a child whose team has lost or who misses a catch or basket. Remember if the game is not benefiting the child, decide if the sport is still a good idea. □

Source: Dr. Loraine Stern, Clinical Professor of Pediatrics at the University of California Los Angeles (UCLA), co-editor of Healthy Kids Magazine.

**Children show
an interest in team sports
about age 8–9.
Before that, children enjoy
more free play than
structured programs.**



So You've Got Yourself a Picky Eater

By Linda Jonides, P.N.P.

THE POTATO CHIPS DIET

It is common for 3 to 5-year-olds to develop-seemingly overnight-specific food preferences, meaning in some cases they'll eat only yellow foods or foods covered completely by applesauce. In other cases, the selection shrinks to potato chips. Then there are the ones who can't get enough of one food on Wednesday and then reject it on Thursday. That can be frustrating, to say the least.

CONTROL AND INDEPENDENCE

Parents must understand that inconsistency in eating is normal. Your child may be less hungry some days because he/she was less active the day before. Or he/she may be the victim of a whim. When children are stubborn about eating at this age, it is part of learning to be independent and in control. Try not to get flustered.

STRATEGIES

Children will not starve themselves and rarely will they lose weight. However, if you do notice weight loss, or other symptoms of illness such as fever, nausea, or diarrhea along with a sudden change in appetite, then you should consult your health care provider.

Here's what you can do to make eating more pleasant:

- Offer your child nutritious foods

and let him/her decide what and how much to eat

- Be a good role model—children will eat however their family does, eventually.
- Try not to rush your child. How-

ever if he/she takes longer than 30 minutes to eat, she/he is really not hungry so it's best to remove the food from the table. That is too long for a small child to sit at the table, and just becomes a power struggle. □

Fun & Healthy Snack Tips

By Jennifer Heffner, Student - University of Florida

Making healthy snack choices is an easy and fun way to teach children good eating habits. Here are some quick, easy ideas to get you started.

1. *Apple Stuff*

Core a small to medium size apple and fill it with a low-sugar peanut butter.

2. *Ants on a log*

Spread a low-sugar peanut butter on celery stalks and sprinkle with raisins.

3. *Kid Kabobs*

Put grapes, cheese cubes, berries and pineapples on a stick. Thin pretzels can be used instead of toothpicks or wooden sticks. Stick each pretzel with one piece of fruit or cheese.

4. *Banana Smoothie*

Blend a cup of vanilla yogurt, one ripe banana and ice for a delicious smoothie.

5. *Frozen Bars*

Blend any fruit juice and (a) banana (in a blender). Pour into small paper cups. Place straw or popsicle-type stick in the center and freeze.

6. *Banana Stick*

Smear banana with peanut butter, cut in half, place on stick and roll in granola.

7. *Pear boats*

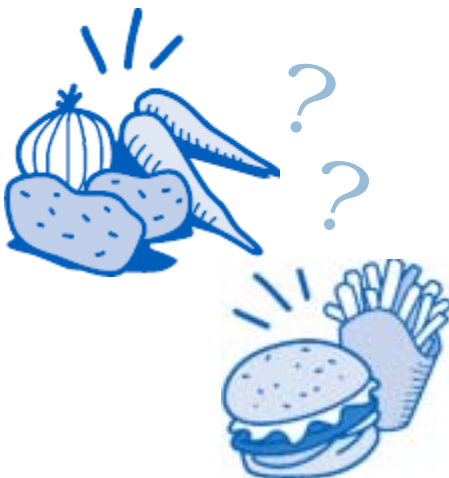
Cut pears in half, place walnuts in center and drizzle with honey.

8. *Frozen grapes (instead of popsicles)*

Wash and freeze seedless red and white grapes.

9. *Bread Pizza*

Melt shredded cheese on toast, cut into triangles and dip in pizza sauce or salsa.



For more information on healthy eating habits go to www.parentcenter.com