

# Early Learning & Education PROGRAMS

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## Healthy Habits for Life

Research shows that living a healthy lifestyle can lower the risk of heart disease, diabetes, stroke, high blood pressure, and obesity. Educating children about good health practices encourages them to make healthy choices for their own health and equips them with healthy habits that can last a lifetime. Educators promote healthy lifestyles and knowledge of nutrition by modeling healthy habits such as correct hand-washing procedures, proper use of tissues, and how to cough into your elbow to minimize the spread of germs.

Kitchen materials such as cookbooks, measuring tools, mixing bowls, and utensils can teach children about nutrition, meal planning, and cooking. Guide children in learning how to follow simple

recipes, read nutrition labels, plan menus, cut out coupons, and make a shopping list. Support children in developing a taste for healthy foods by serving foods that are low in fat, sugar, and sodium (salt). Plan meals where half of the plate includes fruits and vegetables, while the other half has whole grains and protein (lean meats, beans, or tofu). Serve low or non-fat milk and water.

Invite children to cook. Read the recipe and demonstrate how to use cooking tools before you start. Toddlers can use measuring cups and spoons, bowls, baby spoons or forks, and craft sticks (as a knife). Preschoolers can use a potato masher, whisk, spoons, forks, plastic knives, and rolling pins. They can also use appliances like a hand grater,

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## LEARNING WITH BOOKS

The following books can be read to preschool-aged children to explore concepts of nutrition and healthy lifestyles.

- *Eating the Alphabet* by Lois Ehlert
- *Germs Are Not for Sharing* by Elizabeth Verdick
- *Grow Strong: A Book about Healthy Habits* by Cheri J. Meiners
- *Listening to My Body* by Gabi Garcia
- *Little Chef* by Elisabeth Weinberg
- *Mealtime* by Elizabeth Verdick
- *The Water Princess* by Susan Verde
- *Who Needs Teeth?* by Sally Huss
- *Yummy: Good Food Makes Me Strong!* by Shelley Rotner
- *Zoo Zen: A Yoga Story for Kids* by Kristen Fischer







## Get Up and Move!

Movement activities have a variety of benefits for children. Children can build strong fine and gross motor skills, develop balance and coordination, and maintain a healthy weight. Children who engage in movement activities on a daily basis are less likely to experience obesity, diabetes, and other childhood health problems. Offer sixty minutes of structured movement such as an obstacle course, races, yoga, or dancing to songs with directions; and sixty minutes of free play outdoors.

Through dance, children use all their muscles and build strength, endurance, flexibility, and balance. Children also learn to control their bodies, share space with others, release tension, express themselves creatively, and have fun. Dancing only requires music, and it can be done inside or outside. Play “music freeze” with any favorite song. Ask children to stop and start moving their bodies as you turn the music on and off. Make music and musical instruments available to children throughout the day. Incorporate music from the following albums: *Kids In Motion* by Greg and

Steve, *Bean Bag Activities and Coordination Skills* by Kimbo, *Rhythms on Parade* by Hap Palmer, or *Exersongs* by Jack Hartman.

Movement activities can be as simple as kicking a soccer ball around the yard, playing freeze-tag, swinging, climbing, jumping, walking, and running outside. Try using tools like beanbags, a parachute, scarves, long ribbons, hula-hoops, balls, sidewalk chalk, and a roll of painter’s tape. Use the sidewalk chalk and painter’s tape to create obstacle courses or hopscotch squares on cement. Ask the children to help you use the beanbags, hula-hoops, and other items to create obstacle course tasks. Invite children to dance to different types of music while they hold scarves or ribbons. Try classical music, jazz, and music with a variety of rhythms. Children might also like trying easy yoga poses, stretching, or simple aerobics. So let them move, let them groove, let them sing, laugh, and play every day!

Source: *California Preschool Curriculum Framework, Volume 2*, by the California Department of Education (Sacramento, 2011).





# Nature and Health

Spending time outdoors exploring nature has been proven to help children maintain good physical health and promote emotional well-being. Organizations such as the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), the National Institute of Child Health and Human Development (NICHD), and the Kaiser Family Foundation have conducted research on the effects of nature on child development.

Children who spend time outdoors exploring nature are less likely to develop health issues such as obesity and diabetes because when they play outside they are moving and exercising. Playing outdoors also offers children the opportunity to strengthen their eye muscles by focusing on objects that appear at different distances. Both fine and large motor muscles are enhanced by children engaging in outdoor activities that require them to climb, balance, pull, push, throw, kick, and run.

According to research, nature and pet therapies significantly reduce high blood pressure, and are often used for treating

children. Children diagnosed with attention deficit disorder (ADD) show a marked reduction in observed symptoms when they play outdoors. They also found that children who suffered a traumatic event, or are currently under an extreme amount of stress, benefit both mentally and physically by spending time outdoors.

Nature can provide children with unique learning experiences and inspires curiosity and creative thinking. Allowing children to spend time in nature increases their physical and emotional well-being, but it does much more than that. Nature allows children to challenge themselves, solve problems, and develop confidence. Nature empowers children to be active and affect positive changes in their world.

Source: *Last Child In The Woods* by Richard Louv (2005, Algonquin Books of Chapel Hill).



# Healthy Habits for Life



egg beater, blender, electric hand mixer, wooden skewers (blunt ends), a vegetable peeler, and an apple corer with adult supervision and assistance.

Begin with washing fruits and vegetables, tearing lettuce for a salad, adding and mixing ingredients in a bowl, mashing potatoes, or peeling hard-boiled eggs. As children become more skilled, introduce simple recipes like spreading nut or seed butter and jelly on bread, mashing a hard-boiled egg with mayonnaise and a pinch of salt for an egg salad, or layering granola, fruit, and yogurt in a cup for a yogurt parfait.

Use books, music, and daily tasks to teach children the names of body parts and how to communicate health needs. The song *Head, Shoulders, Knees, and Toes* helps children identify parts of their body. Explain care-taking tasks to build knowledge of being healthy. For example, "I see blood on your knee. We need to wash it and put a bandage on it so the germs stay out while it heals."

Dramatic play offers children the opportunity to practice their knowledge of nutrition and healthy habits. During housekeeping play, children can set the table for meals, cook, wash dishes, and care for baby dolls. Provide materials for dolls such as diapers, clothes, blankets, bottles, and bandages. If you have a water table, children can give dolls a bath or wash clothes. Invite children to help create a grocery store or restaurant for play. They can cut coupons, use calculators, and glue pictures of food from magazines on paper plates to create meals. Using the knowledge from what they learn and experience every day will instill habits in children that keep them healthy while they continue to learn and grow.

Source: *California Preschool Curriculum Framework, Volume 2*, by the California Department of Education (Sacramento, 2011).

## LEARNING DURING MEALS

Educators have an opportunity to help children develop healthy eating habits and explore the social expectations that are a part of sharing meals such as passing dishes, waiting until everyone is served to eat, and carrying on conversations about the day's events. During meals you can role-model social skills and discover what children know about nutrition and eating. As you plan cooking activities and meals for your program, consider these questions from the *California Preschool Curriculum Framework, Volume 2*:

1. How have you integrated cultural food preferences and eating practices of families in planning your nutrition program (e.g., meals, cooking activities)?
2. What elements of family-style eating have you incorporated into your mealtime and snack-time activities?
3. How do you allow children to self-regulate their eating? Do you allow flexibility at snack time? What are the expectations for children when they finish their meal?

Source: *California Preschool Curriculum Framework, Volume 2*, by the California Department of Education (Sacramento, 2011).



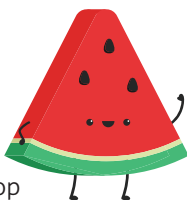
## RECIPES

### Healthy Snack Ideas

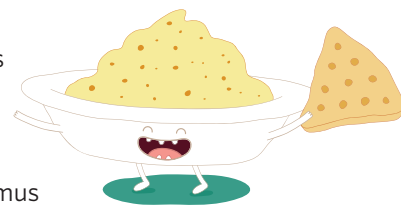
Serve a healthy snack in the morning and afternoon. Make water available throughout the day to keep children hydrated. Display a snack menu where both children and parents can see it. This helps keep parents informed about what is happening in your program and serves as an example of how to plan healthy meals.

It is always best if children can try foods that may cause allergic reactions at home first. These can include: shellfish, nut butters, citrus, and dairy products. Children under three should not have honey. Slice foods that can be a choking hazard into small 1/8th of an inch pieces. Snack ideas for children ages three and up include:

- Whole fruits cut into slices
- Raisins or other dried fruits
- Fruit smoothies
- Apples cut into rings with nut or seed butter spread on top
- Low-fat plain yogurt with honey, berries, or granola
- String cheese
- Hard-boiled eggs cut into wedges



- Whole grain crackers or rice cakes
- Unsalted pretzels
- Non-sugared cereals
- Pita bread with hummus
- Sliced bell peppers with yogurt dip
- Sliced cucumbers or zucchini
- Baked tortilla chips with salsa





# Healthy and Strong

Support children's learning about nutrition and health with a variety of games and activities. As you engage children in activities, document their experiences and preferences with charts, tables, or graphs. Post the documentation where children can see it and share their explorations with parents. For younger children, assign each child a color and write their ideas and preferences in that color. This will help them identify which statements belong to them.

**Title:** Handwashing Song

**Age group:** Infants

**What you need:** Your voice, sink, soap, water, and paper towels.



**What you do:** Help children wash their hands after diaper changes, before and after meals, or after playing outside. If they are not yet able to stand, hold them in front of the sink and wash your hands together. Be sure to wet hands first, apply soap, rinse and scrub hands for twenty seconds, and dry with a paper towel. Singing a song while you wash hands helps infants learn the process and develop a sense of how long twenty seconds lasts. Sing the following song twice to the tune of *Row, Row, Row Your Boat*: "Wash, wash, wash your hands; both sides and in between; use water and soap then rinse them well; and now your hands are clean!"

**What they learn:** Infants develop knowledge of when and how to wash their hands during the daily routine.

**Title:** Scarf Play

**Age group:** Toddlers

**What you need:** Light-weight scarves and favorite music.

**What you do:** Invite children to dance with scarves while you play music. They can move the scarves to the beat of the music, or practice catching and tossing them in the air. Turn off the music and toddlers can toss the scarves back and forth to each other, or try to catch the scarf with a different part of their

body (foot, shoulder, arm, or head). Encourage children to name the body parts the scarf touches.

**What they learn:** Toddlers practice naming the parts of their body while they strengthen large and fine motor skills, improve eye-hand coordination, and practice tracking a moving object (a skill needed to play sports as they grow).

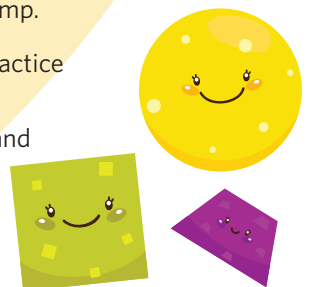
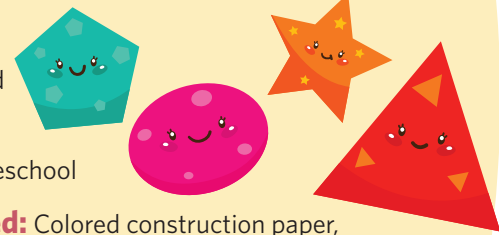
**Title:** Shape and Color Jump

**Age group:** Preschool

**What you need:** Colored construction paper, scissors, clear packing tape, dice, and an empty box.

**What you do:** Cut large shapes out of the construction paper, making each shape in different colors (e.g. a blue, red, and green square). Use tape to secure the shapes to carpet or cement. Cut small coordinating shapes and place them in the empty box. Shake the box and invite children to choose a shape and roll the dice. They need to count the dots on the dice (1-6) after they roll it, find the matching color shape on the ground, and jump on it. For example, if a red triangle is pulled out of the box and a four is rolled with the dice, then the child would find the red triangle and jump on it four times. Vary the game by placing colored blocks or crayons in the box and having children just match colors and jump.

**What they learn:** Children practice jumping with two feet, following multi-step directions, counting, and identifying shapes and/or colors.



# Healthy and Strong

**Title:** Healthy Habits Photo Shoot

**Age group:** School Age

**What you need:** Paper, pen, camera (disposable or digital), poster board or cardstock, scissors, glue, markers, and masking tape.

**What you do:** Ask children to help you make a list of healthy things they do during the day. Offer clues like, "What do we do before we eat?" Once you have a list, invite children to help you make healthy posters for the room. They can take photos of items on the list such as washing hands, eating healthy food, coughing in elbows, and exercising. They can also draw pictures and write words if a camera is not available. Print photos for them to use on the posters. When they are done, hang the posters up where they can easily be seen near sinks or eating areas.

**What they learn:** Children collaborate and take turns with the camera. They practice identifying healthy behaviors, create health expectations and procedures for the group, and remind each other of healthy habits with the support of the visual cues they created. Extend the activity by inviting them to make a video about being healthy.



## ABOUT CHS

For over 129 years, Children's Home Society of California (CHS) has adapted to the changing needs of children and families. Since 1891, CHS has worked diligently to protect our community's children and strengthen their families through diverse programs and services.

At CHS, we view a child not in isolation, but in the context of each family's health, stability, and resources. We believe that families are fundamentally strong and resilient. The mission of CHS is to reach out to children and families at risk with a range of services to ensure every child the opportunity to develop within a safe, healthy, and secure environment.

Therefore, CHS provides a variety of services to children and families in California and nationwide, working to improve their quality of life by offering vital information, education and resource services, and child care assistance.

CHS also serves as an expert resource for childcare providers, other social service agencies, and government agencies at the local, state, and national level. To learn more about CHS and resources available to you, please visit our website at [www.chs-ca.org](http://www.chs-ca.org).

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