

BE ACTIVE KIDSSM



For Parents and Families *Volume 3, Spring 2006*

Welcome to Be Active Kids, an innovative, interactive nutrition, physical activity, and food safety curriculum for children ages four and five. Find out more information at www.beactivekids.org.

Have You Heard?

If you asked your children where fruits and vegetables came from, what would they say? Many preschool children would respond, “from the grocery store, silly!” Teaching children at an early age about how plants grow and give us nutritious things to eat is important.

Planting a simple garden can be a fun physical activity
but also a great learning experience!

Tips for Gardening with Children

- Start by visiting the public library and looking through books and stories that talk about growing things in a garden. Look at pictures of vegetables growing in the ground, flowers blooming, and trees bearing fruit. Begin to talk about how plants need good soil, sunlight, and water to grow.
- Gardens can work in the ground or in containers. Pots, bowls, or milk jugs that are cut in half work great as garden containers.
- Visit your local home supply store, garden center, or farmer’s market for good soil, seeds, and starter plants. For easy to grow plants and seeds, look for sunflowers, radishes, cucumbers, onions, potatoes, mint, morning glories or parsley. Talk with someone at your garden center about what grows easily in your area.
- Use child-size tools like shovels with short handles.
- As plants begin to grow, take walks around the garden and talk about what your children expect to happen. Point out insects, colors, and textures. Count how many seeds you start with, and how many plants are growing.
- Ask children to draw and paint pictures of what is growing in the garden.
- Have a taste testing party. Children will be more likely to taste a new vegetable or herb that they have grown themselves!



Sources: “Reap the Rewards of Gardening with Children” at www.preschooleducation.com and “How Does Your Garden Grow?” at www.preschoolerstoday.com

Physical Activities for Be Active Kids

- Plan “be active” parties! Try ice-skating, roller-skating, bowling, swimming, or a backyard treasure hunt for active celebrations!
- Encourage your children to be active! Even if you are limited on time to be active with them, your words of encouragement can mean a lot. Designate indoor and outdoor playing areas where it is safe to roll, climb, jump, and tumble. Encourage them to play instead of sitting in front of the television or video games.
- Spring cleaning! Children can help with simple chores and cleaning tasks. You will be surprised by how many steps you can take while cleaning the house! If you clean as a family, it takes less time and everyone can take part in being active.
- On a rainy spring day, when you cannot go outside, hide small toys or items around the house for a scavenger hunt! Children can walk, skip, hop, or tiptoe on their way to find the hidden items.



Fun Food Safety



To avoid spreading bacteria, meat and poultry should NOT be washed before cooking. Cooking meats to the proper temperature kills all harmful bacteria. Using a meat thermometer, red meat should reach 160°F (71°C), and poultry 180°F (82°C) to be safe.



Healthy Foods for Be Active Kids



- Drink more water! Water is always important to drink, especially when the weather is warmer. Give your child a small water bottle or cup, and talk about how many times they should fill it up each day. Focus on drinking water instead of juice or soda. For a preschooler, a few ounces of water every 20 minutes on warm days is better than a lot of water all at once.
- Involve children in grocery shopping! Spring is a great time to buy fresh produce. Each week, or once a month, have your child choose a new, nutritious food at the store.
- Play “I spy” for the foods you have on your grocery list! Start giving clues (“I spy something...”) to help find the food. This helps children feel like they have a role in choosing what to buy and eat.

Source: “A Parent’s Guide to Healthy Eating and Physical Activity” available at www.healthychildrenhealthyfutures.org

