

## Inappropriate Uses of Food

ONE IN FIVE children, between the ages of 2 and 5, is overweight or obese. The rates have doubled in



children and tripled in adolescents in the last two decades. The long term consequences of being overweight include: an increased incidence of Type 2 diabetes, heart disease, arthritis and some cancers. In addition, there is an emotional impact on children that may contribute to social isolation, lowered self-esteem and depression.

While there are many reasons for this “obesity epidemic,” one that day care providers and parents can control is being sure they do not use food to reward, comfort, distract or punish the children in their care. The following statements are common examples of these negative messages which encourage eating for reasons other than hunger:

- “If you put away the toys, I will give you each a cookie.” (reward)
- “You scraped your knee when you fell down; here is a piece of candy.” (comfort)
- “Do you want a snack while you’re waiting?” (distraction)
- “Eat all of your beans or we will not go to the park.” (punishment)

### Food as a Reward

Instead of using food as a reward, find non-food alternatives to reward children for good behavior and accomplishments. Some rewards that work well with young children individually or as a group:

- Be the line-leader
- Teach the class
- Have extra art time
- Enjoy class outdoors
- Give a high five
- Have extra recess time
- Play a favorite game or puzzle
- Eat lunch with a teacher
- Be a helper for the day
- Choose the next book to be read
- Give a sticker, stamp or other small item

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### Celebrate CACFP Week March 16 – 22, 2014

- ▶ March is National Nutrition Month. The 2014 theme is “Enjoy the Taste of Eating Right” and focuses attention on the importance of making informed food choices and developing sound eating and physical activity habits.
- ▶ Children are born with the ability to know when they’re full, but they can lose it over time.
- ▶ Research shows that heavier kids tend to overeat but that all kids can learn to recognize their own sense of fullness.
- ▶ Research shows that watching TV is associated with high weights and poor eating habits, yet 36% of kids under 6 have TVs in their bedrooms.

Sources: *EatRight.org.*, *International Journal of Obesity*, *University of Denver*, *Kaiser Family Foundation*,

### Quotable Quotes

“Artichoke: That vegetable of which one has more at the finish than at the start of dinner.”

– Lord Chesterfield

## INSIDE:

- ◆ 10 Things Every Parent & Provider Should Know About Play
- ◆ National Nutrition Month Activity
- ◆ Recipes

# Inappropriate Uses of Food

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## Food as a Comfort

When children are hurt or feel bad it's normal to want to cheer them up. Offering them a favorite food or sweet treat is tempting but it can teach them to cover up their feelings with eating. Children need to “feel” their feelings and deal with them in a constructive way. Offer words of comfort or reassurance and give hugs. Encourage them to talk about what is bothering them and be a nonjudgmental listener.



food is an inappropriate way to use food to manipulate a child.

More effective than punishment, is allowing a natural consequence when a child behaves in a way other than the clearly explained expectation. Look for opportunities to provide “natural consequences” whenever possible. “Natural or logical consequences” refers to temporary limitations that connect to the problem behavior that just occurred.

## Food as a Distraction

Don't encourage eating to cure boredom, distract a child or occupy their time. Instead, follow consistent meal and snack time schedules. When kids get bored, make helpful suggestions, which might include playing with a favorite toy or doing an art project, choosing a book or going outside. Ask them to think about what they should do. Soon they will learn ways to relieve their boredom.

Car rides are another time when food is often used as a distraction. Car rides, whether short or long, can be fun. Simply looking out the window at the passing scenery is engaging. Children can be taught games and songs to entertain themselves in the car without food. Teach them some old favorites like 20 questions, looking for out-of-state license plates, finding each letter from A to Z on passing signs and, of course, singing (either favorite camp songs or along with the radio).

Eating while watching television or during other sedentary activities teaches children to eat mindlessly instead of when they are hungry. Have a designated place for meals and snacks such as the dining room or kitchen table (away from the TV) and enforce a “no eating in front of the television” rule for everyone. The distraction of the television encourages eating without attention to feelings of fullness. That is if they were even hungry to start with! An occasional movie night with popcorn should be special and not the norm.

## Food as a Punishment

Withholding food until a desired behavior is met and/or forcing a child to eat a certain food or a given amount of

Examples of natural consequences:

- “You threw a shovel in the sand box which is dangerous, so you may no longer play in the sand box today.”
- “You two were fighting over a toy and not sharing, so the toy will be put away for today.”
- “Caps were left off the markers in our Art area today so they have dried out. We will not have markers to use for a while.”

A natural consequence of not eating enough at meal time is that a child will feel hungry before the next meal. Do not give in to hand outs, extra snacks or be a short-order cook to the child.

Adults play a key role in teaching an array of healthy habits to children. Help children maintain the ability to self-regulate by recognizing their own signs of hunger and satiety. Don't send a mixed message by using food as a reward, comfort, distraction or punishment. This will help children avoid the long term health consequences associated with being overweight.

Sources: [www.naccrra.smarthorizons.org](http://www.naccrra.smarthorizons.org),  
*5 Times You Never Want to Feed Your Kids (and Why)* by  
 Maryann Tomovich Jacobsen, MS, RD on May 1, 2009

— Catherine Stafford  
 Child Health and Nutrition Specialist  
 Contra Costa Child Care Council

## KIDS' HEALTH & SAFETY

# 10 Things Every Parent and Provider Should Know About Play

## 1 Children learn through their play

Don't underestimate the value of play. Children learn and develop:

- Cognitive skills – like math and problem solving in a pretend grocery store
- Physical abilities – like balancing blocks and running on the playground
- New vocabulary – like the words they need to play with toy dinosaurs
- Social skills – like playing together in a pretend car wash
- Literacy skills – like creating a menu for a pretend restaurant



## 2 Play is healthy

Play helps children grow strong and healthy. It also counteracts obesity issues facing many children today.

## 3 Play reduces stress

Play helps children grow emotionally. It is joyful and provides an outlet for anxiety and stress.

## 4 Play is more than meets the eye

Play is simple and complex. There are many types of play: symbolic, sociodramatic, functional and games with rules, to name just a few. Researchers study play's many aspects: how children learn through play, how outdoor play impacts children's health, the effects of screen time on play, to the need for recess in the school day.

## 5 Make time for play

As parents and childcare providers, you are the biggest supporters of children's learning. You can make sure they have as much time to play as possible during the day to promote cognitive, language, physical, social and emotional development.

## 6 Play and learning go hand-in-hand

They are not separate activities. They are intertwined. Think about them as a science lecture with a lab. Play is the child's lab.

## 7 Play outside

Remember your own outdoor experience of building forts, playing on the beach, sledding in the winter or playing with other children in the neighborhood. Make sure your children create outdoor memories too.

## 8 There's a lot to learn about play

There's a lot written on children and play. Read about the latest research on play, play-based learning, why play is an important part of children's learning and development, the role of play and ideas to share with parents at <http://www.naeyc.org/play>. David Elkind's *The Power of Play* (Da Capo 2007 reprint) is also a great resource.

## 9 Trust your own playful instincts

Remember as a child how play just came naturally? Give children time for play and see all that they are capable of when given the opportunity.

## 10 Play is a child's context for learning

Children practice and reinforce their learning in multiple areas during play. It gives them a place and a time for learning that cannot be achieved through completing a worksheet. For example, in playing restaurant, children write and draw menus, set prices, take orders and make out checks. Play provides rich learning opportunities and leads to children's success and self-esteem.

— *Laurel Bongiorno, PhD*  
*National Association for the Education of Young Children*

## Chicken Wrap

Chicken breast, grilled or baked ..... 1 whole	Soy sauce, light ..... 2 tsp
Flour tortillas, small ..... 4	Water ..... 2 Tbsp
Peanut butter, chunky ..... ¼ cup	Lettuce, shredded ..... ½ cup
	Carrot, shredded ..... ½ cup

1. Slice the cooked chicken and distribute between the tortillas. Sprinkle each wrap with lettuce and carrot.
2. Whisk together peanut butter, soy sauce and water. Drizzle peanut sauce over each wrap. Roll up tightly and serve.

Yield: 4 servings

Meets requirement for grains/breads and protein/meat alternate

— [www.mydailymoment.com](http://www.mydailymoment.com)

## One Muffin, 5 Ways

Eggs ..... 2	Whole wheat flour ..... ½ cup
Plain yogurt ..... 6 ounces	Sugar ..... ½ cup
Canola oil ..... ⅓ cup	Baking soda ..... ½ tsp
Milk ..... ½ cup	Baking powder ..... 2 tsp
Vanilla ..... 1 tsp	Salt ..... ¼ tsp
Flour ..... 1½ cups	

**MIX-INS** (*quantities listed are the amount for a single muffin of that flavor*)

**Banana Nut** – 2 Tbsp chopped banana, 1 Tbsp chopped walnuts

**Zucchini** – 2 Tbsp grated zucchini, 1 Tbsp whole oats

**Blueberry Lemon** – 2 Tbsp fresh or frozen blueberries, ½ tsp lemon zest

**Orange Cranberry** – 2 Tbsp dried cranberries and ½ tsp orange zest

**Apple Cinnamon** – 2 Tbsp chopped apple, pinch of cinnamon and ½ tsp maple syrup

**Carrot Raisin** – 1½ Tbsp grated carrot, ½ Tbsp raisins

1. Preheat oven to 375°F. Coat 12-cup muffin pan with cooking spray.
2. In a medium bowl, lightly beat the eggs; stir in the yogurt, oil, milk and vanilla.
3. In a large bowl, combine the flours, leavening and salt. Stir well. Add the liquid ingredients to the dry and stir just until combined. Spoon into muffin cups, leaving some room for mix-ins.
4. Offer a few mix-ins for the children to choose from to add to the individual cups. Bake for 20 minutes or until the muffins are golden on top and a toothpick inserted in the center comes out clean.

Yield: 12 muffins

Meets requirement for grains/breads

— [www.scholastic.com](http://www.scholastic.com)

## Activity Corner

### MARCH IS NATIONAL NUTRITION MONTH

This year's key messages for National Nutrition Month (NNM) focus on how to combine taste and nutrition to create healthy meals that follow the Dietary Guidelines recommendations.

Involve all the children in a circle time discussion:

- Name as many foods as possible in the NNM logo
- Have they tried any of the foods in the logo?
- What is each child's favorite healthy food?
- What color is the favorite food?
- Is the favorite food part of a special family occasion or holiday?
- Draw a meal that includes a favorite healthy food.

Enjoy  
the Taste of  
**EATING  
RIGHT**



For tip sheets, coloring sheets, games and activities for the children visit [www.eatright.org](http://www.eatright.org)

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**Food Funny** Q: What kind of food should you eat to increase your vision?  
A: Seafood.