

AUGUST 2010

Kindred *Spirits*

Variety helps nourish the body and brain

Help Kids Like Vegetables

Cool Quesa

2 (6 inch) whole wheat tortillas
¼ cup cheddar cheese, shredded
1/3 cup tomatoes, finely chopped
1/3 cup onions, finely chopped
1/3 cup mushrooms, sliced
1/3 cup green peppers, chopped

1. Use non-stick spray on frying pan. Heat for 1 minute on medium.
2. Set aside 2 T. of cheese. Place 1 tortilla in pan, spread with re-remaining cheese. Sprinkle on veggies then the 2 T cheese.
3. Top with second tortilla. Press down lightly to help cheese melt. Turn and cook 1 min. Cut into 4 pieces.

Serves: 2

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"Eating smart and moving more, nourishes the brain and body," states Lynda Johnson, R.D., MU Extension nutrition & health education specialist. "And these positive health benefits translate into academic benefits at school." Students who are well-nourished generally are on-time, attentive in class, on-task and possibly earn better grades.

Offering a variety of foods helps children get the nutrients they need from every food group. However, it can be challenging to get children to eat the recommended 3 to 4 cups of fruits and vegetables a day. Do these statements sound familiar? *"Michael won't eat anything green, just because of the color."* *"Emily says cooked carrots taste weird and refuses to eat them."*

Many young children, especially preschoolers, are picky eaters when it comes to vegetables, and sometimes even fruit. Don't make refusal to eat a big deal, continue to offer new vegetables, as many as 10 different times, and your child will learn to eat new foods.

Johnson offers some tips to deal with picky vegetable eaters:

- ▶ Let your kids be the "produce pickers." Give them the task

of choosing fresh vegetables and fruits at the grocery store or the Farmer's Market.

- ▶ Be a role model, let your child see you munch on raw vegetables.
- ▶ Kids like to try foods they help make. Children can wash tomatoes, tear lettuce, peel carrots or break green beans. Make it seem special by naming a food your child helps prepare. Serve "Sophia's Salad," "Sissy's Carrots" or "Johnnie's Sweet Potatoes."
- ▶ Offer choices. Rather than ask "Do you want broccoli for dinner?" ask "Which would you like for dinner: broccoli or cauliflower?"
- ▶ Serve crunchy veggies, raw or lightly steamed. Go easy on added cheese sauce which covers up the vegetables flavors and adds calories.
- ▶ Offer new foods at the beginning of a meal, when your child is hungry. Don't lecture or force your child to eat.

Math Talk Around the House

Math skills are a predictor of school success

"Wow, that back pack is *heavy*."
"Do you see that *big* dog?"
"Get *two* more cookies for Kelly."

Did you know these questions all help your grandchildren learn about math? It really is *math talk* when you use words like before, after, next, under how much, bigger, smaller, top and bottom. And of course, the usual number words like one, two, three, four, five as well as first, second, third, beginning and ending are also building blocks. These are some of the basic math concepts that young children need to understand to talk about math and math related subjects.

According to Lisa Wallace, MU Extension human development specialist, "You don't need graph paper, calculators or formulas to help young children learn what they need to know about basic math concepts. Simply talking, listening and asking questions can help your grandchildren learn."

Good preschool math skills are a strong predictor of school success according to Washington Learning Systems in Seattle, Washington. So consider using math talk during book time, play time, on a trip to the grocery store and in everyday activities to help your grandchildren prepare for math in school. The years before kindergarten are when young children start to build the foundation for math in with everyday activities and conversations. You

are your grandchild's first math teacher—whether you know it or not!

Questions or statements such as the following help your grandchildren learn without realizing it. Everyday lessons without the tears or structure of homework are good for both you and your grandchildren.

Think about how each of these statements teach math concepts:

"I think your ball is *next* to the chair."
"How *much* juice do you want?"
"We'll go to the movie at *4 o'clock*."
"How *many* carrot sticks do you want?"
"When you set the table, we will need *four* napkins."
"How much *taller* is your sister than you?"
"Which book is on the *bottom*?"

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Where Does Your Money Go?

It is never easy to stretch dollars as far as they need to go especially with children in the home. Why not try another tactic? Dr. Carole Bozworth, MU Extension family financial management specialist suggests that you keep track of where your money is going to see if it is being directed toward your most important expenses. "When we are really busy or overwhelmed, we don't always pay close attention to where our money is going. It goes out a few pennies or dollars at a time without our even realizing it," she said.

There are special notebooks you can purchase for tracking your spending but a small spiral notebook works just as well. Carry it with you so you can write down your spending as soon as it occurs so you do not forget before you get home. Write down what you purchased and how much you spent. You can be fairly general, recording "snack" instead of "coffee and donut." At the end of the month, put the expenses into categories—the same categories you might have in your budget. Some categories include: food, housing, clothing, utilities, transportation, contributions, entertainment, child care, school expenses and personal care. Add together the expenses for each category and take a close look. Is your spending reasonable? Are there places you might cut back to have money for other things? Is money leaking out that you had not noticed? Just the act of keeping track will make you more sensitive to how money is being spent and where you can cut back.