


Nibbles for Health

Nutrition Newsletters for
Parents of Young Children

UPDATED 2008

LEADER'S **GUIDE**





Nibbles for Health is a project developed by the Food and Nutrition Service (FNS) of the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA). The newsletters and sharing sessions are intended for parents of preschool-aged children who participate in the Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP), which provides meals and snacks in child care and adult day care facilities.

However, these nutrition education materials can be used in other settings, such as the Women, Infants and Children (WIC) Program, to help parents and other caregivers promote healthful eating and active living to young children.

In 2008, FNS revised the document and posters to reflect the 2005 Dietary Guidelines for Americans and MyPyramid.

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Table of Contents

A Look at Nibbles for Health	1
Newsletters and Sharing Sessions for Empowering Parents and Caregivers.....	1
The Importance of Nutrition and Physical Activity for Young Children	3
How To Use the Newsletters	4
How To Use the Sharing Sessions and Posters	6
Sharing Sessions	7
Holding Sharing Sessions	7
Sharing Session No. 1 My Pyramid: Steps to a Healthier You.....	9
Sharing Session No. 2 How Much Do You Eat? Estimate Amounts of Foods	15
Sharing Session No. 3 Active Living: How to Get Families Moving.....	20
Sharing Session No. 4 Food Labels: A Guide to Making Food Choices	26
Overview of the Educational Content	
Summary of Topics.....	31
Summary: Newsletter Outcomes and Key Messages	32
Summary: Sharing Sessions Outcomes and Key Messages.....	44
Additional Resources	46

Nibbles for Health Newsletters (Color)

- 1 *A Closer Look at MyPyramid*
- 2 *How Much Is Enough?*
- 3 *Healthful Eating ... Food Labels Help!*
- 4 *Child Care, What Will My Child Eat?*
- 5 *Why Breakfast?*
- 6 *For Growing Bones ... Which Milk?*
- 7 *Enjoying the Family Meal*
- 8 *Healthful Choices For Vegetarian Families*
- 9 *Family Food Shopping: Spend Less, Get More*
- 10 *Family Meals – Fast, Healthful!*
- 11 *Let's Eat Out! Healthful Fast Foods*
- 12 *Let's Eat Out! Making Meals Pleasant*
- 13 *Handling a “Choosy” Eater*
- 14 *Together... Let's Try New Foods!*

- 15 *Teaching Good Food Habits*
- 16 *Trying, Sharing, Enjoying Different Foods*
- 17 *Is My Child's Appetite Normal*
- 18 *Watching My Child Grow!*
- 19 *Juice or Fruit Drinks?*
- 20 *Easy Weekend Lunch Ideas*
- 21 *Why Snacks?*
- 22 *Fats and Oils in Foods: How Much for Kids?*
- 23 *Iron in Foods: Does My Child Get Enough?*
- 24 *Keeping Your Child's Healthy Smile!*
- 25 *Feeding Another Baby Sister or Brother*
- 26 *Food Allergies, Or Just Food Fussiness?*
- 27 *Milk for Kids With Lactose Intolerance*
- 28 *Does My Child Have a Weight Problem?*
- 29 *Supplements... Do Kids Need Them?*
- 30 *The ABC's of Hand Washing*
- 31 *Let's Cook Together*
- 32 *Fight BAC! Keep Family Food Safe*
- 33 *Grow a Family Garden!*
- 34 *Pack a Family Picnic!*
- 35 *Enjoy Moving as a Family*
- 36 *Child's Play!*
- 37 *Let's Move... Cold Weather Fun!*
- 38 *Let's Move... Warm Weather Fun!*
- 39 *Getting Nutrition Advice For Your Family*
- 40 *MyPyramid: Amounts of Foods—For You*

Nibbles for Health Newsletters (Black and White)

Posters

- *MyPyramid*
- *How Much Do YOU Eat?*
- *Enjoy Moving*
- *READ IT before you EAT IT!*

Mini-posters

- *MyPyramid: Steps to a Healthier You*, USDA 167 (package of 25)
- *Enjoy Moving*, USDA 183 (package of 25)

A Look at Nibbles for Health

Newsletters and Sharing Sessions for Empowering Parents and Caregivers

Nibbles for Health offers a newsletter approach for reaching the parents and other caregivers of young children in your program. It is created as a series of easy-to-read, practical, and empowering messages. Each one addresses parents' concerns about healthful eating and active living for the personal health of their child, family, and self. Descriptions and how-tos for four short sharing sessions are included, too. Simply presented, the focused messages are in a format that is easy for you to use.

For Parents and Caregivers of Young Children...

Forty newsletters, and the four short, interactive sharing sessions, can be used in small groups or one-on-one discussions with parents of young children in many settings. These include child care programs, such as those that participate in the Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP) from USDA. *Nibbles for Health* may also be shared with staff, and some families, in other USDA programs, such as WIC and Food Stamps, that provide nutrition services to preschool-aged children.

Why reach parents of young children? The early childhood years are a key time in a child's development. Young children are growing physically. They are also forming attitudes, beliefs, preferences, and habits about eating and physical activity. What parents say and do now can have a lifelong impact on their child's health.

Nibbles for Health guides the whole family, not just the young child, on healthful eating and active living. Its parenting tips also help parents take care of themselves. When parents commit to their own health, their children benefit, too.

Newsletters and Sharing Sessions: Beyond Facts...

The newsletters and sharing sessions do more than provide facts about healthy eating and active living. Their meaningful messages address challenges that parents face when feeding young children and families. Their practical approach offers "can do" ways to empower and motivate them, too.

Goals:

Nibbles for Health newsletters and sharing sessions help parents:

- Create a healthful eating environment:
 - Use the MyPyramid and Nutrition Facts labels to provide a variety of healthful foods for the family.
 - Offer more fruits, vegetables, and whole-grain products in meals and snacks.
 - Provide lower-fat foods more often.
- Move more and sit less.
 - Children need at least 60 minutes of physical activity on most, preferably all, days of the week.
 - Adults need at least 30 minutes of moderate-intensity physical activity most days of the week.
- Prepare food in a safe way to reduce the risk of foodborne illness.
- Support the whole family in their efforts to eat smart and be more physically active.

Messages for parents are...

Simple, quick, and practical—Each newsletter is filled with easy-to-use parenting advice, solutions for feeding children, and ideas for active lifestyles that fit busy, often hectic, family life.

Informative—Besides dealing with everyday child-feeding concerns, the newsletters alert parents to potential health problems. They also offer ways to reduce the likelihood of developing heart disease, overweight and obesity, type 2 diabetes, and other health problems.

Personal—*Nibbles for Health* talks to parents in a positive, warm, and personal way. The newsletters are full of “you-and-me” messages that show how their own self-care helps promote their child’s health.

Individualized—The newsletters recognize that children and their families are unique and special. Parents can adapt specific ideas and strategies to fit their own situation.

Supportive—*Nibbles for Health* reassures parents and acknowledges that they already do many things right.

Skill building—The newsletters build skills in feeding children, and the sharing sessions provide practice with tools to help both the child and the family eat smart and be more physically active.

Developmentally appropriate—Newsletter topics connect child nutrition with other developmental issues that parents face: building self-esteem, dealing with growing independence, parenting siblings, playing safely, and monitoring growth.

Empowering—Parents don’t always realize how powerful they are in helping their children learn habits for lifelong health. The newsletters focus on parental responsibility and “can-do” strategies to help them.

For a quick view of the issues, outcomes, and empowerment messages addressed in the newsletters and sharing sessions, refer to “Overview of the Educational Content” on page 31.



The Importance of Nutrition and Physical Activity for Young Children

Nibbles for Health supports parents as they strive to be good role models in their food and lifestyle choices

Helping a child grow and develop...

During the preschool years, young children grow at an amazing rate physically, emotionally, socially, and intellectually. Healthful eating, in addition to an environment that supports their social, mental, and emotional growth, is essential in this process. Preschool children need fewer calories but the same variety of foods that older children and adults require. MyPyramid can be used to encourage parents of young children to help them eat healthy and be physically active. Parents need to understand these messages:

- Make half of your grains whole
- Vary your veggies
- Focus on fruits
- Get your calcium-rich foods
- Go lean with protein

This is also the best time for parents to help children choose to eat more foods low in saturated fats, cholesterol, *trans* fats, sodium, and added sugars. Using these strategies for smart eating, parents can help lower the chances of heart disease, overweight, type 2 diabetes, and other chronic health problems for themselves and their children.

How much does your child need?

Most children, ages 2 to 5, need between 1,000 – 1,600 calories a day. The amount your child needs depends on his or her age, gender, height, weight, and physical activity level. To find your child's pyramid, go to MyPyramid.gov.

Smaller portions are more appropriate for preschool children than adult-sized portions, which can overwhelm smaller stomachs. A child's growth rate slows somewhat during the preschool years, and urging a child to eat too much can lead to weight-related problems.

Exploring a child's world of food...

Hands-on experiences with food help children explore and enjoy a variety of foods. Helping in the kitchen or garden promotes independence, helps build self-esteem, develops motor and mental skills, and offers a chance for parents and children to spend time together.

Nibbles for Health offers fun and safe ways for parents and children to cook and garden together.

Enjoying the chance for active play...

Active play is the work of childhood. Children should be physically active for at least 60 minutes on most, preferably all, days of the week. Vigorous exercise helps develop motor skills, increases strength and endurance, relieves stress, and promotes learning, self-assurance, and good health. Physical activity also helps children develop habits that decrease the chances of becoming overweight. Parents and other caregivers need to include moderate-intensity physical activity and safe play, as a regular part of their family life. Playing together also nurtures family relationships.

Nibbles for Health supports parents as they strive to be good role models in their food and lifestyle choices.

How To Use the Newsletters

The *Nibbles for Health* newsletters are presented in a ready-to-copy format to be used to match your center or program needs.

■ *Distribute the Nibbles for Health newsletters on a routine basis as an ongoing source of parent education.*

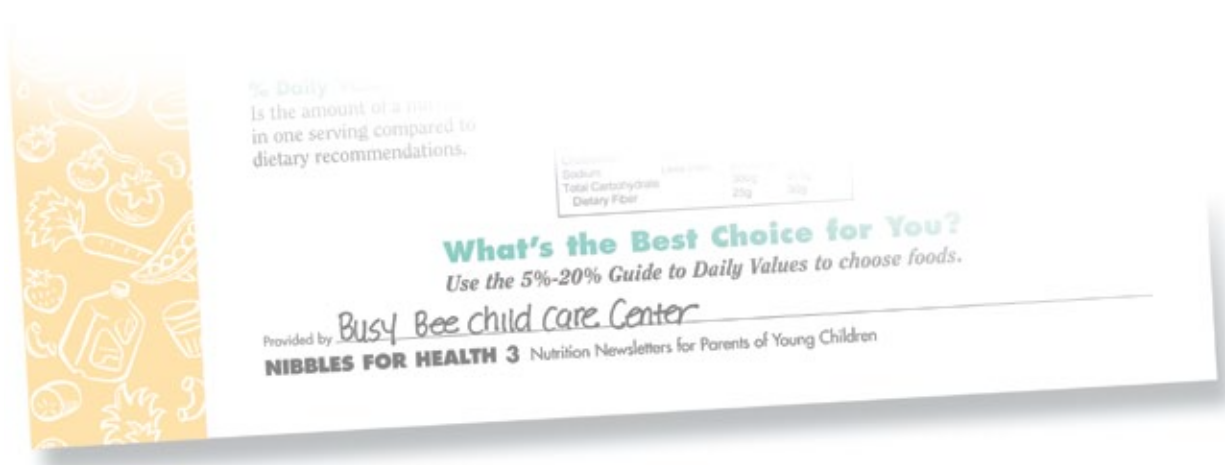
- ✓ **Copy and provide** the newsletters as a weekly or bimonthly source of information. Put copies of the newsletters in a pick-up box in the area where parents pick up their children.
- ✓ **Use different colored paper** every time you make black and white copies.
- ✓ **Display one of the posters and provide related newsletters** for parents to take home and read.
- ✓ **Encourage parents to read** the newsletters and keep them handy. They might display them on their refrigerator as quick reminders, or collect them as a set to be used as a reference.

■ *Additional Uses:*

- ✓ **Include *Nibbles for Health* topics in parent newsletters**, sponsored by your center or program.
- ✓ **Share the newsletters with parents who express concerns** about how to deal with feeding and behavior problems.
- ✓ **Put your organization's name on the newsletters**, and use them as part of your promotional efforts. A space at the bottom has been provided for this purpose. Parents often want to see examples of the extra benefits you provide as an indication of high quality child care standards.
- ✓ **Print them on the backs of menus** for meals and snacks served to young children, as part of the Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP).
- ✓ **Distribute copies at events** at your child care center or at community health fairs and similar events.
- ✓ **Attach the newsletters to press releases** on child feeding, and send them to local newspapers.
- ✓ **Make copies available in group meetings or counseling sessions** with parents and caregivers.

Several newsletters address food and nutrition issues that apply to some, but not all, children including vegetarian diets, food allergies, lactose intolerance, weight problems, and the need for nutrient supplements.

- **Remember to localize or personalize the messages.** Most newsletters have places where local or personalized information can be inserted.
 - ✓ **Write in local information** before you duplicate four of the newsletters:
 - No. 9 *Family Food Shopping: Spend Less, Get More*—add phone numbers for your community food assistance offices.
 - No. 4 *Child Care: What Will My Child Eat?*—things to know about your child care center.
 - No. 34 *Grow a Family Garden*—add your County Extension Office phone number.
 - No. 40 *Getting Nutrition Advice for Your Family*—sources for nutrition advice in your community
 - ✓ **Encourage parents to jot down their personal ideas** on how to eat smart and be more physically active. Urge them to add the ideas of their children and other family members.
 - ✓ **Encourage parents to analyze what they are doing already and to commit to small steps** they might take to make improvements.
- **Make a plan to promote the empowerment messages of the 40 newsletters.** Because each newsletter can stand alone, you can use them in any order and distribute only those that match your program goals and budget.



How To Use the Sharing Sessions and Posters

The four posters along with the four outlines for sharing sessions are presented in small groups or one-on-one to help parents and other caregivers develop specific skills. These sessions are:

- MyPyramid: Steps to a Healthier You
- How Much Do You Eat? Estimate Amounts of Foods
- Active Living: How To Get Families Moving
- Food Labels: A Tool for Making Food Choices

The sharing sessions focus on a single topic and take only about 20 minutes or so to present. They also take a minimum amount of your time to plan and prepare.

■ Consider the opportunities for holding a sharing session.

- ✓ Set up a table or booth at your parent nights and open houses.
- ✓ Hold a sharing session on your parent nights.
- ✓ Set up a table in the foyer for parents who may have time to linger and talk with you.
- ✓ Arrange an exhibit at community health fairs. The personal touch will attract interest for your exhibit and your program, and show that you care about parents and families, as well as children.
- ✓ Sponsor sharing sessions in locations where parents gather. This could include the local library, community health center, or religious center. March, Nutrition Month, is a good time. Also ask your County Extension Agent to sponsor a sharing session.

■ Plan sharing sessions when you know you have 20 minutes or more to spend with a few parents and caregivers.

- ✓ Move the posters to different places in your center where they will attract interest and attention.
- ✓ Create interesting displays around the posters.
 - MyPyramid* poster: Display foods from each of the food groups and arrange them by food group.
 - How Much Do YOU Eat?* poster: Display the objects from the poster (milk carton, computer mouse, baseball, etc.) along with photos from magazines of a variety of foods.
 - Enjoy Moving* poster: Hang magazine pictures or photos of children and families doing fun physically active things. Take photos of the families and children in your center, or ask parents to share their photos from home.
 - READ IT before you EAT IT* poster: Hang labels from food packages, making sure the Nutrition Facts are visible. Invite parents to bring in labels from their family foods.
- ✓ Use posters in community displays to promote your program.
- ✓ Keep a stack of mini-posters nearby for parents to take. The black-and-white masters for the posters are on the CD. Print them.

Sharing Sessions

Holding Sharing Sessions

As a session leader, you do not need to be an expert to know all the answers. You can share ideas, repeat the key messages, encourage parents to make positive health choices, and listen to what they have to say. The related newsletters provide the factual information they need.

Before the sharing session...

- Plan the sharing session for when you know you have at least 20 minutes or more to spend with a few parents and caregivers. Look over the session outline and related newsletters before meeting with parents. Gather any materials noted in the outline, and duplicate specific newsletters to distribute. The outline will give you the key messages to convey.
- Plan for snacks from specific food groups. Offer a snack the parents can make with or for their young child. You might find some ideas in Newsletter No. 21, *Why Snacks?*

During the sharing session...

- Help parents and caregivers feel comfortable. Some may not be accustomed to parent meetings.
 - ✓ **Greet them by name**, and introduce yourself in a relaxed way.
Let them introduce themselves to others.
 - ✓ **Let parents** and other caregivers know you are there to offer support.
 - ✓ **Break the ice** by inviting parents to talk about their child.
- Consider these tips to effectively guide active learning:
 - ✓ **Keep your messages** simple and share one message at a time.
 - ✓ **Present information** and engage in activities that are practical and relevant to parents of young children.
 - ✓ **Be positive** and supportive as parents explore the topics.
 - ✓ **Listen actively** to identify and address parents' concerns.
 - ✓ **Be personally enthusiastic**.
 - ✓ **Stay flexible**. Let the activity continue as long as parents are engaged.
 - ✓ **Keep the learning on track**, and respond to parents' needs.
 - ✓ **Help them find** additional and appropriate help afterwards if they need it.
- Repeat the Key Messages during the sharing session, from page 44, during the sharing session. These are the main ideas that parents and caregivers need to learn.