

Nourishing Children with Books

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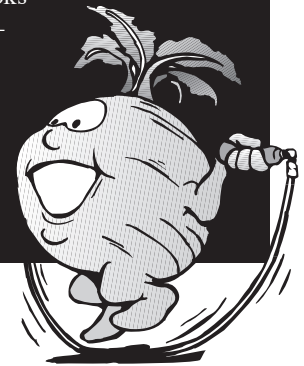
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Children's growth and development require nourishment for the body and the mind. Books with food and nutrition topics, cultural food patterns, and physical activity themes help to improve the quality of life of children by exposing them to a variety of foods and activities through creative stories. Feeding and exercising the mind are also important to a child's wellness. Learning to read is a vital ingredient to a child's success and maturation.



1

Select story books to promote MyPyramid. Books with messages and stories that promote the MyPyramid concepts are helpful to reinforce variety, balance, and moderation in food choices along with appropriate physical activity. Books should match the reading level of the child, reflect the child's culture, and introduce new cultural and ethnic features of food, nutrition, and physical activity.



MyPyramid d.gov

STEPS TO A HEALTHIER YOU

2

Select books at an appropriate reading level.

- Begin with picture books (*Eating the Alphabet: Fruits and Vegetables from A to Z*. Author: Lois Ehlert. Harcourt Brace & Company, 1993).
- Add rhyming or repetition books (*Green Eggs and Ham*. Author: Dr. Seuss. Beginner Books, 1960).
- Include predictable books (*If You Give a Pig a Pancake*. Author: Laura Joffe Numeroff, Illustrator: Felicia Bond. HarperCollins, 1998).
- Expand into creative, unpredictable, or nonsensical books (*Cloudy With a Chance of Meatballs*. Author: Judi Barrett, Illustrator: Ron Barrett. Atheneum, 1978).

- Begin with books that have patterns similar to the child's family (*Feast for 10*. Author: Cathryn Falwell. Clarion Books, 1993).
- Add books with diverse food, nutrition, and exercise cultures and customs (*Everybody Bakes Bread*. Author: Norah Dooley, Illustrator: Peter J. Thornton. Lerner Publishing Group, 1996).
- Include books that avoid stereotypical characters and roles (*Potluck*. Author: Anne Shelby, Illustrator: Irene Trivas. Orchard Books, 1994).
- Expand into books with culturally sensitive ethical messages (*The Little Red Hen*. Author: Paul Galdone. Clarion Books, 1973).

3

Select books that incorporate culturally diverse ways of interacting and making decisions about food choices.

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Beyond the Book: Actively Engaging Children in Books

Listening to a story being read helps a child develop communication and language skills. Actively engaging the child in the story expands the storyline and the application of the book's messages. It also helps develop the child's mental and physical functioning. Here are some ideas to more fully nourish children with books.

Before Beginning the Book

- Find a quiet, relaxing room or space; eliminate distractions such as television or radio and other interferences.
- Read the title and examine the cover; ask the child what the book is about.

During Reading

- Talk about what is happening; ask the child questions to help him/her relate his/her own experiences to those in the book.
- Ask the child to name foods and their shapes, colors, and textures.
- Have the child identify if babies, children, or adults eat the foods and/or engage in the activities in the book.
- Discuss the people in the book and their families; have the child indicate if this is similar to his/her own eating and activities and those of his/her family.
- Relate foods and eating in the book to nutrition and health.
- Ask the child to point out what is real and what is pretend about the food, nutrition, physical activity, and characters in the book.
- Talk about food safety.

After Finishing the Book

- Let the child tell you about the book – what did he/she like, dislike, find funny or strange.
- Ask the child if the story is like or different from his/her own family.
- Have the child make-up a different ending to the story.
- Discuss other books that are similar.
- Talk about how the foods and activities in the book show what foods and exercises are healthy.

Follow-up Activities

Children learn more fully when their minds and bodies are actively engaged. Plan follow-up activities after reading the book that support the MyPyramid and physical activity concepts. For example:

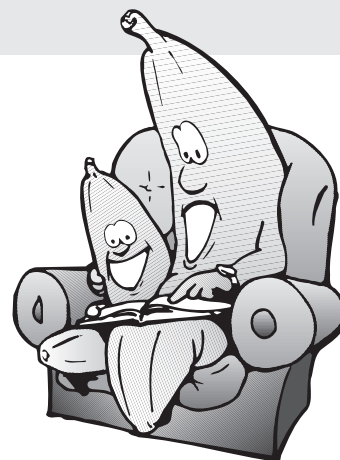
- Take the child on a field trip to a garden or farm after reading about fruits and vegetables.
- Go grocery shopping with the child after reading about names of foods. With the child, prepare and eat a snack made from foods in the book.
- Have the child help with meal preparation and clean-up.
- Engage in a physical activity challenge.

These activities will reinforce the healthy messages of the book. Be sure that a follow-up project lets the child be physically active, is developmentally appropriate, supports a nutrition principle, is culturally sensitive, and is safe. Recognition for completing books and follow-up activities make the child feel important and special. Awarding

Daily Living Skills – Standards of Learning (SOLs)

Virginia's public schools have a set of standards regarding the information and knowledge that students should learn. Nutrition education through reading books and completing follow-up activities can fit in and support the school curriculum by meeting the SOLs. For example:

- English/Language Arts – listening and reading skills; developing story characters based on foods; writing stories about food, nutrition, and physical activity
- History/Social Sciences – exploring crop production and cooking practices in the region and the U.S.
- Mathematics – following steps; counting and measuring servings; using fractions
- Science – measuring; food forms; food safety; body systems and functions
- Fine Arts (Music and Visual) – drawings of foods; recreating stories with puppetry; singing folktales of foods, nutrition, and physical activity
- Health – food and energy; body systems and functions
- Physical Education – beanbag tosses; relay races with foods; President's Council on Physical Fitness program



Finding Books that Nourish

Listed below are some tips to help you get started. Many food-, nutrition-, and exercise-related books are available. Involve the children in choosing the books and activities and help them digest the stories and concepts. Nourishing children with books can be expanded beyond the individual child. There are ways to involve the family and community in reading exploration that are identified as aspects of elementary school Standards of Learning.

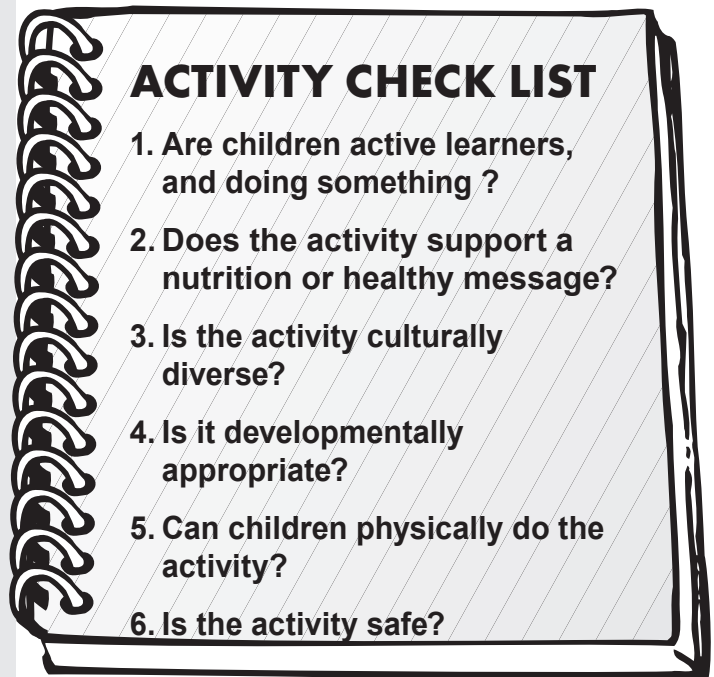
Your **local or regional library** is an excellent resource for nourishing books. Elementary school libraries may also house many books with food, nutrition, and exercise themes that children may check-out. Many bookstores host “story times” for children, and employees are often good resources for recommending a variety of books that may also be found at the local library.

Your local **Virginia Cooperative Extension agent** can also help you find appropriate books. Contact your local Extension office or login to the Internet at <http://www.ext.vt.edu/offices/> to find an office and connect with an Extension agent.

Michigan State University developed a comprehensive list of over 300 books that cover food, nutrition, health, and physical activity topics, categorized by food group and theme. The Michigan Team Nutrition List is at <http://www.tn.fcs.msue.msu.edu/Booklist.pdf>.

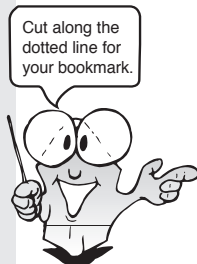
Another helpful online resource was developed by the **Food and Nutrition Information Center** of the United States Department of Agriculture. Food and Nutrition Resources for Grades Preschool through 6, <http://www.nal.usda.gov/fnic/pubs/bibs/edu/preschool.html#Lan>, lists books and other educational materials that can be borrowed from the center.

A credible website is The Children’s Literature Web Guide, <http://www.ucalgary.ca/~dKbrown/usawards.html>. It lists the **American Library Association Children’s Literature Awards**. The Association for Library Service to Children, <http://www.ala.org/ala/alsc/alsc.htm>, works toward developing the nation’s youth through reading. This organization provides resources that may be purchased for local libraries, schools, or community centers.

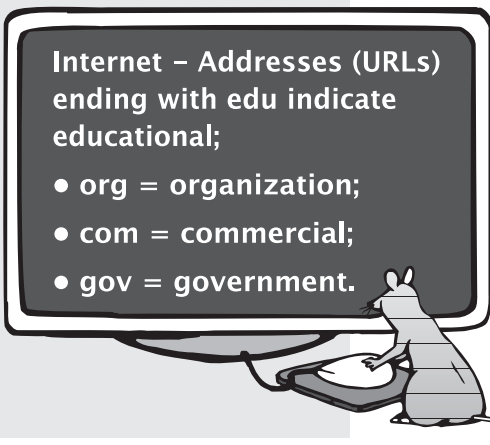


ACTIVITY CHECK LIST

1. Are children active learners, and doing something ?
2. Does the activity support a nutrition or healthy message?
3. Is the activity culturally diverse?
4. Is it developmentally appropriate?
5. Can children physically do the activity?
6. Is the activity safe?



Be an
**Active
Learner**

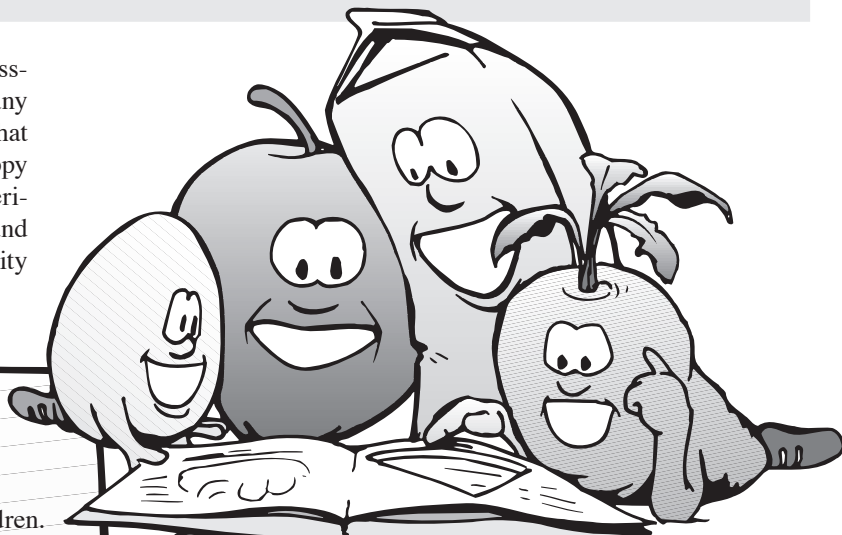


Internet – Addresses (URLs) ending with edu indicate educational;

- org = organization;
- com = commercial;
- gov = government.

Reading - Family and Community Involvement

Some caregivers believe childhood is play and stress-free time. But young children are exposed to many food responsibilities in their daily routines and what they see in various media. They learn about happy and pleasant as well as disturbing and harsh experiences. Good literature shows a child how to cope and to develop attitudes and practices to enhance Quality of Life.



Beyond Books – Family Activities

Take regular trips to the library with children. Encourage children to write and illustrate original storybooks as presents for family members. Consider forming a parent-child book club. The books can have food, nutrition, and physical activity themes. Serve as a sponsor of the Reading is Fundamental (RIF) program (<http://www.rif.org>). Plan community events around reading-focused programs. For example, March is National Nutrition Month; April is School Library Media Month and includes Children's Book Week and National Library Week; September is Library Card Signup Month.

Learning as a Family

Children adopt the behaviors of their parents, care providers, and teachers. Let a child see you reading. Take every opportunity to read to a child or with a child. Reading is not limited to books – children can read coupons, food packages, and advertisements. Your guidance is very important as children are exposed to a multitude of food advertisements, nutrition messages, and childhood activities.

Summary

Nourishing Children with Books supports the development of reading skills in youth and promotes learning about food, nutrition, and physical activity that encourages healthy lifestyle choices. Appropriately selected books and follow-up activities can improve reading skills, enhance an interest in reading, and support good food and physical activity choices in children.



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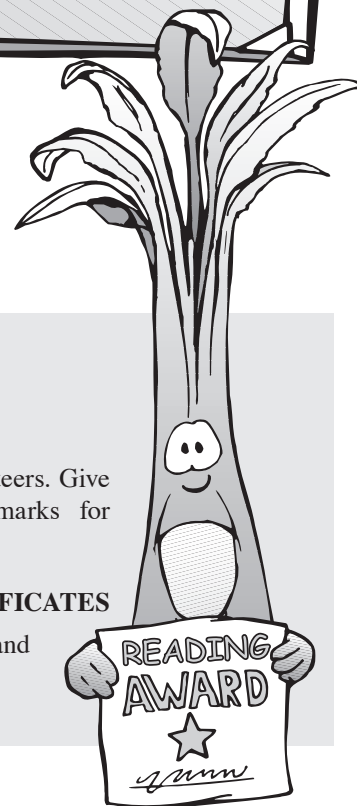


Awards

Award young readers and volunteers. Give certificates, ribbons, or bookmarks for books children read.

GOLD LEAF AWARD CERTIFICATES

The leaf represents book leaves and nutritious vegetable leaves, and gold signifies excellence.



This publication was originally authored by Ann Hertzler, Ph.D., R.D., Extension Specialist (retired), Department of Human Nutrition, Foods, and Exercise, Virginia Tech.

Other Nourishing Books

Possible Books to Support the Standards of Learning

- English/Language Arts – *Cherries and Cherry Pits*. Author: Vera B. Williams. Morrow, William & Company, 1991
- History/Social Sciences – *Corn is Maize: The Gift of the Indians*. Author: Aiki. HarperCollins, 1996
- Mathematics – *Eating Fractions*. Author: Bruce McMillan. Scholastic Press, 1991
- Science – *From Seed to Plant*. Author: Gail Gibbons. Holiday House, Inc., 1993
- Fine Arts – *The Story of Johnny Appleseed*. Author: Aiki. Simon & Schuster, 1991
- Health – *My First Body Book*. Editor: Lara Tankel Holtz, Illustrator: Ellis Nadler. DK Publishing, 1995
- Physical Education – *The Children's Busy Book: 365 Creative Games and Activities to Keep Your 6- to 10-Year-Old Busy*. Author: Trish Kuffner, Illustrator: Laurel Aiello. Meadowbrook Press, 2001

Some Books to Engage Children while Reading

- Relate child's thoughts to foods and ideas in book – *How Are You Peeling: Foods With Moods*. Author: Saxton Freymann, Illustrator: Joost Effers. Scholastic, 1999
- Look at shapes, colors, and textures – *The Very Hungry Caterpillar*. Author: Eric Carle. Philomel Books, 1987
- Consider foods for different ages – *No Moon, No Milk!* Author: Chris Babcock, Illustrator: Mark Teague. Crown Publishers, 1993
- Relate themes to child and child's family – *Froggy Eats Out*. Author: Jonathan London, Illustrator: Frank Remkiewicz. Viking Children's Books, 2001
- Talk about nutrition and health – *Why Do I Eat?* Author: Rachel Wright and Stuart Trotter. Atheneum, 1992
- Think about what is real versus make-believe – *One Hungry Monster: A Counting Book in Rhyme*. Author: Susan O'Keefe, Illustrator: Lynn Munsinger. Little, Brown & Company, 1992
- Talk about importance of food safety – *Richard Scarry's Mr. Frumble's Coffee Shop Disaster*. Author: Richard Scarry. Western Publishing Company, 1993

Some Books to Engage Children after Reading

- Likes/dislikes, funny or strange things – *Blueberries for Sal*. Author: Robert McCloskey. Puffin Books, 1976
- Relate stories to child's own family – *The Tiny, Tiny Boy and the Big, Big Cow*. Author: Nancy Van Laan, Illustrator: Marjorie Priceman. Random House, 1993

- Create different endings – *Giggle, Giggle, Quack*. Author: Doreen Cronin, Illustrator: Betsy Lewin. Simon & Schuster, 2002
- Compare to other books – *If You Give a Mouse a Cookie* is similar to *If You Give a Moose a Muffin*, both books written by: Laura Joffe Numeroff, Illustrated by: Felicia Bond. HarperCollins, 1985 and 1991, respectively
- Healthy foods and activities – *Oliver's Fruit Salad*. Author: Vivian French, Illustrator: Alison Bartlett. Orchard Books, 1998

Books to Support Activities and Learning after Reading

- Field trips to garden or farms – *P is for Peach: A Georgia Alphabet*. Author: Carol Crane, Illustrator: Mark Braught. Sleeping Bear Press, 2002
- Grocery shopping – *The Little Old Man Who Could Not Read*. Author: Irma Simonton Black, Illustrator: Seymour. Egmont Childrens Books, 1970
- Cooking, food preparation, and clean-up – *Maisy Makes Lemonade*. Author: Lucy Cousins. Candlewick Press, 2002 and *Pancakes, Pancakes!* Author: Eric Carle. Scholastic, Inc., 1992
- Moving – *Bright Path: Young Jim Thorpe*. Author: Don Brown. Roaring Brook Press, 2006

Other Food- and Activity-Based Books to Nourish

- *The Apple Pie Tree*. Author: Zoe Hall, Illustrator: Shari Halpern. Blue Sky, 1996
- *The Beastly Feast*. Author: Bruce Goldstone, Illustrator: Blair Lent. Henry Holt & Company, 1998
- *Benny Bakes a Cake*. Author: Eve Rice. Greenwillow Books, 1993
- *The Berenstain Bears and Too Much Junk Food*. Authors: Stan and Jan Berenstain. Random House, 1985
- *Bread and Jam for Francis*. Author: Russell Hoban, Illustrator: Lillian Hoban. HarperCollins, 1986
- *The Bread that Grew*. Author: Roberta L. Duyff. Milliken, 1987
- *Brown Cow, Green Grass, Yellow Mellow Sun*. Author: Ellen B. Jackson, Illustrator: Victoria Raymond. Hyperion Books, 1995
- *Bunny Cakes*. Author: Rosemary Wells. Viking, 1997
- *The Carrot Seed*. Author: Ruth Krauss, Illustrator: Crockett Johnson. HarperCollins, 1989
- *Chato's Kitchen*. Author: Gary Soto, Illustrator: Susan Guevara. Putnam & Grosset Group, 1995
- *Chicken Soup with Rice: A Book of Months*. Author: Maurice Sendak. HarperTrophy, 1991

- *A Cow, a Bee, a Cookie, and Me.* Author: Meredith Hooper, Illustrator: Alison Bartlett. Kingfisher, 1997
 - *The Doorbell Rang.* Author: Pat Hutchins. Greenwillow Books, 1986
 - *Eat Up Gemma.* Author: Sarah Hayes, Illustrator: Jan Ormerod. Lothrop, Lee & Shepard Books, 1988
 - *Everybody Cooks Rice.* Author: Norah Dooley, Illustrator: Peter J. Thornton. Lerner Publishing Group, 1992
 - *First Tomato (A Voyage to the Bunny Planet).* Author: Rosemary Wells. Dial, 1992
 - *Frog Goes to Dinner.* Author: Mercer Mayer. Puffin Books, 1977
 - *A Garden for a Groundhog.* Author: Lorna Balian. Star Bright Books, Inc., 2004
 - *Germs! Germs! Germs!* Author: Bobbi Katz, Illustrator: Steve Bjorkman. Cartwheel, 1996
 - *The Gingerbread Boy.* Author: Paul Galdone. Clarion Books, 1975
 - *Gregory, the Terrible Eater.* Author: Mitchell Sharmat, Illustrator: Ariane Dewey & Jose Aruego. Simon & Schuster, 1980
 - *Growing Vegetable Soup.* Author: Lois Ehlert. Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1990
 - *How Pizza Came to Queens.* Author: Dayal Kaur Khalsa. Clarkson Potter, 1989
 - *How to Make an Apple Pie and See the World.* Author: Marjorie Priceman. Dragonfly Books, 1996
 - *Just Enough Carrots.* Author: Stuart J. Murphy, Illustrator: Frank Remkiewicz. HarperTrophy, 1997
 - *Just Shopping With Mom.* Author: Mercer Mayer. Random House, 1998
 - *Little Nino's Pizzeria.* Author: Karen Barbour. Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1987
 - *The Magic Porridge Pot.* Author: Paul Galdone. Clarion Books, 1979
 - *Maisy Goes Shopping.* Author: Lucy Cousins. Candlewick, 2001
 - *Marsupial Sue Presents "The Runaway Pancake."* Author: John Lithgow, Illustrator: Jack E. Davis. Simon & Schuster, 2005
 - *Mighty Jackie: The Strike-Out Queen.* Author: Marissa Moss, Illustrator: C.F. Payne. Simon & Schuster, 2004
 - *Oliver Button is a Sissy.* Author: Tomie dePaola. Voyager Books, 1979
 - *Stone Soup.* Author: Marcia Brown. Atheneum, 1989
 - *Tiger Soup: An Anansi Story from Jamaica.* Author: Retold and illustrated by Francis Temple. Orchard Books, 1994
 - *Warhogs in the Kitchen: A Sloppy Counting Book.* Author: Pamela Duncan, Illustrator: Henry Cole. Hyperion, 1998
- Reviewed by Novella Ruffin, Extension specialist, Virginia State University*