



Speaking for Children

What's best for our youngest children is best for everyone!

Making the most of your child's summer

Children need fun things to do for the summer months that will keep them active and healthy. Spending time with your child is the BEST way to help them become confident and strong individuals. So have fun and enjoy.

Below are some activities to help kick-off your summer:

- Visit museums, go to parks that offer nature walks, or set up your own nature walk. Point out different trees, birds, cloud shapes, local attractions, places of historical interest, flowers, etc. Don't forget the sun block and water to rehydrate
- Encourage children to gather leaves and flowers to press between the pages of a book.
- Check websites that offer free printables for children of various ages, instructions for arts and crafts and other printable or downloadable goodies.
- Be silly together! Sing and dance. Play dress-up and make-believe. Let your child's imagination soar . . .
- Collect and decorate small boxes and make them available for children to collect rocks, bugs, and other 'treasures' in.
- A tablet with pre-marked lines is ideal for practicing printing by writing capital and lower case letters and numbers with enough space in between each one for young children to copy.



- Check into library activities for children. Many libraries have 'make it and take it art and craft activities' in various themes for different ages plus story telling days where librarians, or adult and teen volunteers read books, tell stories, or host other activities for children.
- Check with your local theater to see if they offer specially priced, summer movie matinee tickets for G-rated movies or classics like Lassie, Benji, and Disney movies.
- Call the YMCA, city parks and recreation departments, and nature centers to find out about various classes that may be offered throughout the summer like swimming or tennis lessons.
- Play with items that will help children get plenty of outdoor exercise, as well as fun, such as soft plastic balls, sidewalk chalk, bubbles, jump ropes, and hula hoops.
- Have an outdoor photo shoot (even if you aren't the greatest photographer). Let your child run and get dirty. Let them laugh and carry on. Get pictures doing any of the above activities. When your child is older the pictures will be a reminder of how much fun he had with you. The more candid the shots, the better they will be. When it is too hot or rainy to go outside, make a scrapbook.

Have a fun summer together!

Soda free summer—Rethink your drink

Did you know?

- Research finds a powerful link between drinking full calorie sodas and obesity. Soda drinking is also linked to reduced consumption of milk and fruit products and Type 2 diabetes.
- The average 4-5 year old consumes 17 teaspoons of added sugar a day which amounts to approximately **64.6 pounds of added sugar a year**. The majority of a child's added sugar intake comes from fruit drinks, high-fat desserts, soft drinks and candy.
- That soda is the #1 source of sugar in the American Diet.
- That an 11.25 ounce juice pouch contains 9 teaspoons of added sugar.

Cut that: Simple ways to slash sugar

(reprint from *Disney Family.com*)

Because sugar isn't always that easy to spot, your child can pack away an astonishing quantity before you can say "want a juice box with your frosted granola bar?"

What is sugar?

Sugar is a carbohydrate that delivers energy to the body quickly. Trouble is, it has zero nutritional value. And if you've hosted a birthday party or witnessed a post-Halloween binge, you know its energy-boost is short-lived, resulting in a sugar crash that can leave your child hungrier than before.

There are two types of sugar:

- **Natural sugar** is found in many foods -- including fruit, certain vegetables, milk, and dairy products.
- **Added sugar** is commonly found in most packaged products -- think cereals, candy, ketchup, and salad dressing -- to boost flavor. Added sugar is often called high-fructose syrup or super-concentrated sugar; fructose, fruit pectin, and cane juice are other names.

Why cut sugar?

While sugar is okay in moderation, most kids consume it in excess—and there's nothing sweet about the conse-

quences. Research has linked excess sugar to pediatric obesity and Type 2 diabetes in children.

Major offenders

It's easy for kids to overdo sugar simply by drinking sweetened beverages. OJ at breakfast, a juice box at snack, chocolate milk at lunch, a sports drink after soccer, and wham -- your child has gulped down three times the daily recommended amount. Candy and processed, packaged sweets and snacks are more obvious culprits, along with syrup found in canned fruit and the maple variety that kids love to drown waffles in.

More sugar facts

- Soda and other sugary drinks (such as fruit juice, fruit punch or Gatorade) in baby bottles and sippy cups contribute to early tooth decay in infants.
- Ordering water instead of soda in restaurants just once a week saves you \$78 and 12,480 calories every year.
- Even 100% fruit juice contains a kind of sugar called "fructose." **Doctors recommend young children drink no more than ½ cup of juice per day** and no fruit juice for infants under 6 months old.

Rethink your child's drink

What a child drinks drastically effects the amount of calories consumed and calcium needed to build strong bones. For kids of all ages, water and milk are the best choices.

Choose milk: Milk is a source of calcium which the body needs to ensure strong bones and teeth. Nonfat or low-fat (1%) milk is recommended for children over age 2.

Drink water: Water is critical for good health and development

Eat fruit: Always make fresh fruit available as an alternative to juice. Fruit is a great thirst quencher and packed with nutrients.

Be a positive role model: If children see you quenching your thirst with water, milk or a piece of fresh fruit, they are likely to do the same.

About First 5 Sonoma County

First 5 Sonoma County funds children's health insurance and programs that improve childcare quality, help children succeed in school, and help parents provide safe and nurturing environments for their children. For more information on *First 5 Sonoma County* and its programs, please call 565-6626 or visit www.first5sonomacounty.org