

April 2024

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Plank Challenge

Planks, or making your body stiff like a board while supporting yourself on your arms, are excellent for core strength which we all need. Below are various styles of planks. For the Challenge, start off doing each one for 20 seconds and do three rounds of them. The next week increase your time to 30 seconds. Increase by 10 seconds each week until you are at 60 seconds—one minute—by the last day.

Regular Plank

Side Plank (each side)

Plank with Arm/Leg Lift

Hip Dips (each side)



Walk It Out

One of the easiest ways to get exercise is walking. On Sundays this month, take a walk with a family member, friend, or even your dog. Aim for at least 30 minutes. The last Sunday of the month is National Skipping Day! Instead of walking, try skipping for 30 minutes. You are guaranteed to increase your heart rate and get a great workout!



April Adventures

Let's get out of town this month and explore some new places! Check out these places within a short drive of the Des Moines Metro for new trails, playgrounds, parks, fishing spots, as well as other fun things to explore!

[Ada Hayden Park, Ames](#)

[Pammel State Park, Winterset](#)

[Neil Smith National Wildlife Refuge, Prairie City](#)

[Whiterock Conservancy, Coon Rapids](#)

[Grimes Farm and Conservation Center](#)

Fruit & Veggie Snack

An easy way to make sure you are getting all of your veggie servings in each day is to have some as a snack. Carrots and celery are most popular, but don't forget zucchini sticks, pepper strips, frozen peas, and other awesome veggies. You can even dip them in low-fat ranch, hummus, or peanut butter. Do the same thing with fruits. Think about which fruit or veggie you want for snack at the beginning of the week so you know to get it at the grocery store. You can also peel or slice it so it is ready to go either at school or at home after school. Below are a couple options for fruits and veggies you may have never tried.

Jicama

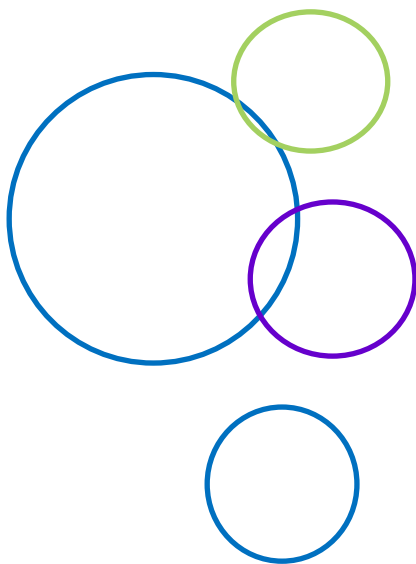
Dragonfruit

Kohlrabi

Starfruit

Sweet potato chips

Rambutan



Soccer Prep

It's soccer time! Spring is the time to start soccer practice and games in Iowa. Maybe you have a team you already play on or you just like to kick the ball around and make goals on your own. Soccer players do a lot of running and making quick turns. These exercises will help you get in shape for the fast moves needed to make those goals.

Do each exercise for 1 minute or until you need to stop. Repeat the series 4 times.

Single-leg squat (each leg 1 minute)

Box Jumps

Pushups

Fast feet drills

Tennis Time

Tennis is another sport we see a lot more in the spring. Tennis involves fast moves on the court as well as a strong core and shoulders to swing the racket. The circuit below will help you improve your swing and foot speed.

For the circuit below, do 10-15 repetitions of each exercise followed by 30 seconds of rest. Repeat the same exercise 3 times and then go onto the next one using the same number of reps and rest time between sets.

Skaters

Squat Jump

Tricep Dips

Should Press

Pack a Healthy Lunch

We picked this topic because National Make Lunch Count Day is in March. For these days, focus on the 5 food groups—Vegetables, Fruits, Protein, Whole Grains, and Dairy. Include at least one item from each food group to make a balanced lunch. If you need ideas, check out the Healthy Cold Lunch flyer at the end of this calendar.

For an electronic version with clickable links, go to: <https://www.unitypoint.org/blankchildrens/fitness-and-nutrition-calendar.aspx>



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HEALTHY

Cold Lunch Options

The Sandwich (and variations)

Choose whole-grain bread, low-fat meats, and cheeses. Add some lettuce or spinach, onions, or sliced peppers. Mix it up using pita pockets to stuff or tortillas to roll-up.

Roll-ups (the sandwich variation)

You can use the same ingredients as you would for a regular sandwich. Just lay them on the tortilla and roll them up. Need some other ideas? Pizza roll-ups with pizza sauce, pepperoni, and mozzarella cheese. Peanut butter and banana, and cream cheese with shredded or thinly sliced veggies incorporate fruits and vegetables as well.

Things on Sticks

Make kabobs out of your sandwich foods by cutting bread and cheese into small squares and threading onto a stick with meats and sandwich veggies. Fruit kabobs are another great option. Kids always like things on sticks.

Cold Pasta Salad

use whole-grain pasta, chunks of cheese and low-fat meat. Throw in some veggies like cherry tomatoes, diced red and green peppers, or cucumber and toss with Italian dressing.

Veggie Options

Get creative with zucchini sticks, snap peas, cucumbers, and frozen peas. The peas will thaw by lunch time.

Dips

Hummus or dips made with a Greek yogurt base are good sources of protein. Kids love to dip anything and it's a great way to get them to eat veggies.

Veggie Chips

while potato chips are often a staple in cold lunches, they aren't a good source of nutrition. Try making your own sweet potato chips or purchasing veggie chips that are 100% vegetable.

Mom/Dad-ables

Like a Lunchable, but with healthy options packed by mom or dad. Use a divided storage container and pack in small pieces of cheese and meat, whole grain crackers, veggies, and fruit.

Squeeze Yogurt

Many "kids" yogurts are high in sugar. Look for lower-sugar options. You can even freeze it and it will thaw by lunchtime. Add chopped fruit to make a yogurt parfait.

Cereal Mix

Do you have several almost-empty boxes of cereal laying around? Mix those last bits of cereal together with some dried fruit without added sugar to create a fun trail mix.

Salad

Send washed lettuces and spinach in a zipper bag with another bag of diced ham or turkey, cheese, hardboiled egg, or sliced veggies. Take a small container of dressing. Kids can mix the salad and dressing in the lettuce bag and pour out on a plate or eat directly from the bag. Taco salad is another great option.

Food Safety

Remember to use ice pack to keep your food cold until lunch time.



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