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ConnectCare News

Your Medicaid and ARKids First Connection to a Medical Home • Spring-Summer 2014

Free Summer Meals for Kids

For many kids, summertime means two things: fun and friends. But for others, it means the only meal they can depend on “school lunch” is no longer available. Families are faced with stretching already tight food budgets to feed hungry appetites through the summer. Working parents must make other arrangements for their kids in the summer. Most parents know that kids at home making their own decisions may make unhealthy food choices or not eat at all.

The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) offers free summer meals to kids 18 and younger across Arkansas. Summer meals sites can be in schools, churches, and community centers. Feeding sites are at safe places for kids and teens. The meals are healthy and follow nutrition guidelines that are paid for by the USDA.

Many sites offer fun activities that kids enjoy. Parents do not need to apply to the program. It does not affect any other benefits they are receiving. They can simply bring their child to a summer meals site where their kids can eat a healthy, nutritious meal.

There are USDA summer meals sites in almost every county in Arkansas. There are several ways to find a summer meals site near you.

Call 1-866-3 HUNGRY or text FoodAR to 877877 or go to <http://www.whyhungry.org/findfood>. The site will be updated for use by the time school is out. If you go to the site and no information is posted, try again closer to the last days of the school year.

Source: Arkansas Hunger Alliance



Playground Safety

Play it Safe

Playgrounds are great places for children to test and grow their physical abilities. But whether they're playing on a backyard swing set or at a public park, there are some dangers on every playground. To keep your kids safe while they play, follow this S.A.F.E. checklist:

S.A.F.E. Checklist

Supervision is important.

Adults should watch kids at playgrounds at all times. They should be on the lookout for any dangers and be ready to step in if a child needs help.

Play on Age-appropriate equipment.

Children under the age of 5 should play in a separate area from older children to keep play fun and safe for everyone. Smaller children also need to play on equipment that is right for their size. Playing on equipment made for larger children may result in injuries.

Falls to the ground are cushioned.

A fall to concrete, asphalt, or even dirt and grass could result in a serious injury. Look for playgrounds that have sand, wood chips, or rubber matting under swings, seesaws, and jungle gyms. All of these surfaces will cushion your child if he or she falls.

Equipment is safe.

Check out the equipment before every play session. Make sure everything is anchored safely to the ground and that all the equipment is in good working order. Look for open S hooks or other pieces that could catch on a child's clothing. Also check for rusted or exposed bolts and sharp edges or points. If at home, cover these areas with protective rubber. If at a public playground, report the problem to the appropriate authorities.

Safety Rules

- Teach children never to walk in front or behind the swings while others are swinging.
- Always use the ladder to climb up a slide. Never climb up the sliding surface.
- Tell children not to push or shove on the slide ladder. Make sure children go down one at a time.
- Children under the age of 4 should not use jungle gyms or any other climbing equipment that is taller than they are.



Sources: Arkansas Children's Hospital, American Academy of Pediatrics, National Program for Playground Safety



Keeping Meal Time Fun



Children learn from watching and copying adults behavior. Here are tips on how to keep the mealtime atmosphere fun and healthy for the whole family.

- Schedule meal and snacks. Avoid casual snacking that can lead to weight problems.
- Eliminate interference. Turn off the television and video games during meals.
- Create a pleasant atmosphere for eating. Include everyone in the conversation.
- Sit down and eat with children. You can't be a role model if you aren't there.
- Practice good table manners. Compliment children when they do right, rather than nagging them about mistakes. Thank the cook(s) before being excused.
- Eat the same food as the children eat, unless there is a reason why you can't. Explain the reason to the children.
- Prepare and serve a variety of foods that look and taste good.
- Be aware of portion sizes. Give children small portions, and assure them they can have more if they want.
- No one needs to finish everything on his or her plate. Allow children to choose what and how much to eat. Respect individual taste preferences. Restricting favorite foods can cause anxiety and lead to overeating if the child fears being deprived of food.
- Place no special value on the dessert. Dessert is not a reward for eating "what's good for you."

Source: The American Dietetic Association/Foundation and Kellogg Company

Healthy Tips for Picky Eaters

Do any of the statements below remind you of your child?

"Ebony will only eat peanut butter sandwiches!"

"Michael won't eat anything green, just because of the color."

"Bananas used to be Matt's favorite food, now he won't even touch them!"

Your child may eat only a certain type of food or refuse foods based on a certain color or texture. They may also play at the table and may not want to eat. Don't worry if your child is a picky eater. Picky eating behavior is common for many children from the age of 2 to 5 years. As long as your child has plenty of energy and is growing, he or she is most likely eating enough to be healthy. If you have concerns about your child's growth or eating behavior, talk to your child's doctor.

How to cope with picky eating

Your child's picky eating is temporary. If you don't make it a big deal, it will usually end before school age. Try the following tips to help you deal with your child's picky eating behavior in a positive way. Check the ones that work for you and your child.

Let your kids be "produce pickers."

Let them pick out fruits and veggies at the store. Have your child help you prepare meals. Children learn about food and get excited about tasting food when they help make meals. Let them add ingredients, scrub veggies, or help stir food.

Offer choices.

Rather than ask, "Do you want broccoli for dinner?" ask "Which would you like for dinner, broccoli or cauliflower?"

Enjoy each other while eating family meals together.

Talk about fun and happy things. If meals are times for family arguments, your child may learn unhealthy attitudes toward food.

Offer the same foods for the whole family.

Don't be a "short-order cook," making a different meal for your child. Your child will be okay even if he or she does not eat a meal now and then.

Trying new foods

Your child may not want to try new foods. It is normal for children to reject foods they have never tried before. Here are some tips to get your child to try new foods:

- Small portions, big benefits. Let your kids try small portions of new foods that you enjoy. Give them a small taste at first and be patient with them. When they develop a taste for more types of foods, it's easier to plan family meals.
- Offer only one new food at a time. Serve something that you know your child likes along with the new food. Offering more new foods all at once could be too much for your child.
- Be a good role model. Try new foods yourself. Describe their taste, texture, and smell to your child.
- Offer new foods first. Your child is most hungry at the start of a meal. Sometimes, new foods take time. Kids don't always take to new foods right away. Offer new foods many times. It may take up to a dozen tries for a child to accept a new food.

Make food fun!

Help your child develop healthy eating habits by getting him or her involved and making food fun! Get creative in the kitchen with these cool ideas. Check the ones you try at home, and be sure to add your own ideas, too! Cut a food into fun and easy shapes with cookie cutters.

Encourage your child to invent and help prepare new snacks. Create new tastes by pairing low-fat dressings or dips with vegetables. Try hummus or salsa as a dip for veggies. Name a food your child helps create. Make a big deal of serving "Maria's Salad" or "Peter's Sweet Potatoes" for dinner.

Source: ChooseMyplate.gov

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- Find a Medicaid dentist in your area
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- Remind you of appointments
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Ask the Expert:



Is there another way to get a doctor assigned instead of calling the helpline? Can I go online and get a doctor?

You may also request a doctor using the online assign/change request form on our website at www.seeyourdoc.org. Using the online method DOES NOT guarantee an assignment/change of the doctor. If the doctor has an opening, ConnectCare will make the assignment/change. It will take up to 3 business days to assign/change the doctor and mail the confirmation letter.

It's very important that if you need a doctor assigned immediately to call the Help Line at 1-800-275-1131 6 am – 8 pm Monday-Friday. Assignments made on the helpline is entered in the system and become effective immediately.

Source: ConnectCare