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Family Matters

Improving Health Together

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Newsletter

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Getting out into Nature: Healthy Snacks for Hiking

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Hiking with Kids:

Spring is just around the corner and there is nothing better after a long winter than getting out and exploring the great outdoors, especially with kids! Hiking is a great way to exercise, working almost every muscle group in the body including legs, arms, abdominals and even the neck and shoulders. Once you have found the hike that you'd like to do, treat it as a learning experience, but make sure to keep it fun.

Tips for Success:

- Keep it easy and kid-friendly. Choose a hike that isn't too long or hard. Consider setting a goal or destination that your child can look forward to reaching. Keep in mind this "destination" might need to change depending on how the hike is going. Sometimes it might just need to be a knocked down tree up ahead or a nice spot in the shade.
- Time is your friend; plan for lots of it. Start earlier than you think. Kids are natural explorers and there is a lot to discover. Allow time to climb up rocks, play in a stream and turn over tree trunks. Be prepared for lots of questions. Consider bringing a couple of wildflower, bird or bug visual guidebooks. Your local Extension Office or library may have books available to borrow. Once you open up the possibility of species identification, the fun never stops.
- Prepare for anything. Consider packing anything your little hikers may need like wet wipes, tissues, lip balm, sunscreen, binoculars, plastic jars or a magnifying glass. Make sure to bring adequate water and a basic first aid kit. There is a good chance your kid might fall and need a Band-Aid.
- Dress for success. Especially here in Colorado, weather can change quickly. Make sure to pack layers and don't forget items for rain or wind. Leave a change of clean dry clothes in the car in case someone gets wet or muddy.
- Plan for frequent energy stops. Hiking takes energy! Be prepared for multiple small snack and drink breaks.



Helping families increase physical activity and enjoy healthy foods ...

- Pick a leader and make sure to rotate. Kids love to be in charge and feel empowered. Let them take turns setting the pace.
- Make it fun. Keep the kids motivated. Sing songs, play games, create a scavenger hunt, count things.
- Keep it positive. Kids are mirrors, if you are grumpy or complaining so will they. Also, don't be afraid to encourage your kids by celebrating how well they hike or how strong they are.



- Leave no trace. Teach kids to be good stewards of the land. Make sure to collect all trash and if you are comfortable, pick-up trash you see along your hike. Teach them to pack it in and pack it out.

Hike often. The more you do it the easier it will be. As kids get more familiar with hiking, they can take on more responsibility.

Let's Talk

Hiking with kids is a great opportunity to encourage them to get involved and take responsibility. Pull out the map and talk about where they would like to go, how far they are willing to travel and what they would like to see or do. Would they like to cross a stream, see some wildlife or mount a peak? Get them involved in the preparation for the hike. Encourage them to carry their own backpack (but be prepared you might have to carry it for some of the hike). Ask them to help select and prepare snacks.

Recipe for Health: No Bake Date Energy Balls

The great news about these little gems is they are totally customizable! No peanut butter? Substitute with any other nut butter. Not into chocolate? Omit it and add more oats and chia seeds. Never heard of chia seeds? Substitute with flax or hemp seeds.



Ingredients:

- 1 cup-pitted dates (if dry, soak in warm water for 10 minutes then drain well)
- 2/3 cup rolled oats
- 1/4 cup of dark chocolate (small chips or roughly chopped)
- 3 Tbsp. peanut butter
- 1 Tbsp. chia seeds

Directions:

1. Pulse pitted dates in food processor or blender until they are in small pieces or form into a ball.
2. Add oats, chocolate, peanut butter, and chia seeds and pulse/mix until combined. Roll into 1-inch balls.
3. Set by placing in fridge or freezer for 15 minutes. These will keep fresh in an airtight container for up to a week, or freeze for longer-term storage.