



Planning a Healthy Play Date

Laura Cipullo, RD, CDE and Mom

Has pizza become synonymous with play dates in your home? We've all been there; even I am guilty of turning to a ready-made slice or two as a no-effort default when I've scant time to spare. But as moms and dads, it's important that we make an effort to change the way we view our children's after school activities – and play dates are no exception.

What better way to give your children their daily dose of antioxidants than a delicious, refreshing smoothie? Add half fresh and half frozen berries to your blender. Then mix with 1 cup of 0% fat Greek yogurt for protein. Better yet, let the kids choose which fruit to use and let them add it to the blender to get them more involved.

1. Start off with smoothies for a snack.

What better way to give your children their daily dose of antioxidants than a delicious, refreshing smoothie? Add half fresh and half frozen berries to your blender. Then mix with 1 cup of 0% fat Greek yogurt for protein. Better yet, let the kids choose which fruit to use and let them add it to the blender to get them more involved.

Smoothies are a great way to incorporate extra nutrition into a play date's healthy plan. Have the kids add

nutrient powerhouses such as chia seeds and wheat germ. Use this time to talk about the benefits of the smoothie's ingredients (chia seeds, fruits and yogurt) and of course, to enjoy a tasty after-school snack. Refer to Canada's [5 to 10 a day](#) for more nutrition education.



2. Run, ride, rock 'n' roll.

After the kids recharge with their smoothies, let them run around, ride a bike, kick a ball or even rock it out to music. Think of this as an opportunity for them to exercise without even knowing it. Did you know that many children don't get their 30 minutes of exercise during the school day? As parents, it is our job to ensure they get moving! Visit [Kids Eat Right](#) for more movement ideas.

3. Plan an art project.

Help the kids to focus and calm themselves after their movement. Plan an art project to exercise the creative side of their right brain. Of course, being a dietitian, I encourage art with nutrition education in mind. My kids love making a simple [MyPlate](#), by gluing dried fruits (for fruits), seaweed (for

veggies), whole-wheat pasta (for grains) and beans (for protein) to a paper plate. If you don't have time, you can always save this project for a rainy day!



4. Keep it real with dinner.

Before the kids part ways, serve up an easy, homemade, dish that you know the kids already love. Just make sure to modify it's nutrition. My oldest son and his friends love mac and cheese. To improve, use whole-wheat noodles and add either spinach or tiny broccoli tops to your dish for added nutritional value. (The broccoli tops should be super tiny for especially picky palates.) Instead of chicken fingers, cook up skewered chicken satay.

