

Pick a Better Snack

A family and community newsletter

IOWA
Health and
Human Services

Spend Smart. Eat Smart.

Download the Spend Smart. Eat Smart. app to help you save money. Use the unit price calculator at the grocery store to compare similar items. If you want to know if it's cheaper to buy canned or frozen peas, enter the cost and amount for each product. It will show you the better deal!

Another great thing about this app is that it can help you pick good quality produce. Go to the Produce Basics section (listed under More) and find the list of fruits and vegetables. Click one to learn how to buy, store and prepare it. A handy tool when buying fruits and veggies! Find more information at <https://spendsmart.extension.iastate.edu/shop>.



PLAY YOUR WAY One Hour a Day

Move Your Way

Getting kids 60 minutes of physical activity every day can seem like a lot. The good news is that it can be broken down into smaller pieces throughout the day, and it all adds up! A typical day could include a walk to school (10 minutes), recess (20 minutes), a walk home from school (10 minutes), playing in the park (15 minutes) and a family dance party after dinner (5 minutes). This adds up to 60 minutes! Check out <https://health.gov/moveyourway#parents>.



Tomato

- Don't miss the best-tasting tomatoes, which are grown locally and ready to eat in July - September.
- Store whole tomatoes on the countertop, not in the fridge.
- Try cherry or grape tomatoes for an easy snack.



Cucumber

- Want something cool and refreshing? Try cucumbers.
- Eat plain or with a dip, or add to salads, sandwiches and fresh spring rolls for an extra crunch!
- Store uncut cucumbers in the fridge for up to 7-10 days. Clean under cool running water before eating.



Eggplant

- Check your local farmers market for this versatile garden vegetable.
- Look for different kinds; Chinese and Japanese eggplants are long, skinny and cook up quickly.
- Eat grilled, roasted, baked - or any way you like it!

September

B I N G O

				
Park/Slide	Play	Ride a Bike	Locally Grown Fruit or Veggie	Zucchini
				
Run	Cucumber	Stretch	Tomato	Walk
				
Eggplant	Hike a Trail	Family Ate a Meal Together		Play
				
Summer Squash	Play	Frozen Vegetable	Canned Fruit	Catch
				
Frozen Fruit	Melon	Jump	Walk	Canned Tomato

TO PLAY:

Put an X through the squares of fruits, vegetables and physical activities you try. Get five in a row, column or diagonally for a BINGO!



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Farm to School—And Home!

In the Pick a Better Snack program, your child will have the chance to taste fruits and vegetables that can grow in Iowa. Some of the produce students taste in class will come from farms in your community! We're excited to support local farmers and teach students where food comes from.

You may even be inspired to grow some of your own fruits and veggies. For those with SNAP/EBT, you can use your benefits to purchase food-producing seeds and plants.

Another way to get involved with local foods is to volunteer in your school or community garden. It's a great way to help out, and you'll most likely take home delicious food.



PLAY YOUR WAY One Hour a Day

A Great Way to Start the Day!

Walking to school is a great way to connect with your child as the day begins. Oftentimes we default to driving to school, and the drop off and pick up lane can be really stressful!

Skip the traffic chaos—park nearby and walk with your child to school. Just 5-10 minutes together can help maintain a close relationship, boost communication and give you both a healthy dose of sunshine and movement to start the day.

Apple



- Visit an Iowa orchard and find many favorite varieties: Honeycrisp, Red Delicious, Gala, McIntosh, Regents and Zestar.
- Wash, then bite – a satisfying snack with over 4 grams of fiber (with skin).
- Store in the fridge for up to 3 weeks. Since they keep so long, you're less likely to throw them out and waste food.

Melon



- Grab a melon before they're out of season, which runs July through October.
- Mix into a fruit salad or cut into wedges or bite-size pieces for a sweet, healthy snack or dessert.
- Look for cantaloupe with yellowish skin. A good watermelon will have a flat, yellow spot where it touched the ground while ripening.

Pear



- Eat them in the fall while in season; they taste better, and you'll get a better deal.
- Place fresh pears in a paper sack on the countertop to ripen if needed. Rinse under water when ready to eat.
- Leave the skin on for more fiber and other nutrients.

October

B I N G O

				
Go to the Park	Carrot	Dribble	Potato	Lettuce Greens
				
Apple	Jicama	Kick	Canned Pears	Rake
				
Walk	Dance		Melons	Canned Vegetable
				
Sweet Potato	Play	Frozen Vegetable	Skate	Pears
				
Play	Canned Sweet Potato	Locally Grown Fruit or Veggie	Walk	Applesauce

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WIC

Need help feeding your family? If you've lost income, you may qualify for WIC—a program for pregnant women, new moms, and families with kids under 5. WIC provides healthy foods, breastfeeding support and nutrition education.

Use WIC benefits to buy groceries like fresh or frozen fruits and veggies. In the summer, get extra dollars to shop at farmers markets. You'll also get access to recipes, cooking videos and referrals to other services. Find a location at signupwic.com or call (800) 532-1575. Learn more at <https://hhs.iowa.gov/assistance-programs/food-assistance/wic-iowa>.



PLAY YOUR WAY One Hour a Day

Make It A Game!

Physical activity can be playing a fun silly game with your child. Try playing a game with UNO® cards, a traditional deck of cards or dice. Have your kids determine an activity for each color, suit or number. Then do that activity as many times as the number on the card. Examples of activities include squats, starfish jumps or jumping jacks, dance or “air” instruments, arm circles, skipping and free choice for the wild cards or jokers.

Cabbage



- Try green, red, Napa, Bok-choy, or savoy cabbage—all part of the Brassica family (the same family that includes nutrition superstars broccoli and kale).
- Add to stir-fries or Asian noodle dishes. Top fish tacos with coleslaw or pupusas with curtido.
- Grow it in the spring or fall when it's cooler.

Brussels Sprouts



- Grow or find a Brussels sprout plant and you'll be amazed. The sprouts, which look like baby cabbages, grow along the tall stem.
- Store Brussels sprouts (another Brassica veggie) in the fridge. Rinse, peel off wilted layers, cut off the stem and slice in half before cooking.
- Try them roasted, steamed or sauteed.

Kohlrabi



- Expand your veggie options and try kohlrabi, another member of the Brassica family.
- Don't confuse it for a root vegetable; it grows above ground.
- Enjoy the light green or purple “bulbs” raw, steamed or roasted. You can eat the leaves, too!

November

B I N G O

 Play	 Cranberries	 Walk	 Squash	 Grapes
 Potato	 Play	 Sweet Potato	 Walk	 100% Fruit Juice
 Skip	 Frozen Vegetables	 Family Ate a Meal Together		 Cabbage
 Canned Fruit or Vegetable	 Run	 Jicama	 Jump	 Sweet Potato
 Kohlrabi or Brussel Sprouts	 Raisins	 Ride a Bike	 Carrot	 Stretch

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Child Care Assistance

You may be eligible to save money on child care and free up your budget for other important things like nutritious foods. Iowa's Child Care Assistance program helps cover child care expenses for families who meet income guidelines and are working at least 28 hours a week, in school or in a training program.

- You choose your child care provider.
- The provider must pass a background check and meet safety standards.
- The program pays the provider directly.

Apply online at <https://secureapp.dhs.state.ia.us/clientportal>.
Questions? Call (866) 448-4605.



PLAY YOUR WAY One Hour a Day

Take A Breath

This time of year can be stressful. Between school, work, family activities, holidays, extra-curricular activities and performances, it's busy! Try connecting and slowing down with some yoga. There are a lot of free videos online, or you can create your own moves mimicking animals such as a cat (on all fours and arch your back), butterfly (seated with your feet together and legs bent to look like a butterfly), and flamingo (standing, with one foot on the opposite knee, and hands over head).

Carrot



- Put carrots—fresh, canned or frozen—on your grocery list for a low-cost veggie.
- Try petite carrots plain, with a dip, or microwave in the bag (if the package says “microwavable”).
- Shred fresh carrots for a salad or smoothie. Cut them up for a stir-fry, or roast them with a little honey and oil.

Beet



- Change up your menu with beets. Look for smaller beets which are more tender. Most beets you'll find are red.
- Remove the leaves, which you can eat raw or cooked, and store beets in the fridge for up to 3 weeks.
- Buy canned or pickled beets for an easy way to enjoy beets.

Potato



- Eat potatoes for complex carbohydrates, potassium and vitamin C.
- Choose healthy toppings like cooked vegetables, chives, green onions, salsa or plain yogurt.
- Keep the skin on for fiber and flavor!

December

B I N G O

				
Dance	Banana	Snow Angels	Canned Fruit	Carrots
				You Choose!
Play in the Snow	Jump	Walk	Kiwi	Any Fruit or Vegetable
				
Potatoes	Beets		Play	Skate
				
Banana	Walk		Cauliflower	Play
				
Shoot Hoops	Frozen Vegetables	Kiwi	Stretch	Salad Greens

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5-2-1-0 Healthy Choices Count!

Did you make a New Year's resolution? If you're like many others who participate in this tradition each January, you made a goal to improve your health. 5-2-1-0 Healthy Choices Count can help! It's an initiative to help children (it's good for adults, too) develop good habits. Each number in the name stands for a health-related goal to strive for each day:

- 5 = Eat 5 or more servings of fruits and vegetables.
- 2 = Keep recreational screen time to under 2 hours.
- 1 = Be active at least one hour a day.
- 0 = Limit sugary drinks. Choose water.

Change is not easy for most people. Try starting small and replacing an old behavior with a new behavior that is healthy and enjoyable. For ideas and tips to meet your goals, go to www.iowahealthieststate.com/5210.



PLAY YOUR WAY One Hour a Day

Take In the Sunshine

Getting outdoors and breathing in fresh air is important year-round, not just in the spring and summer. Does going out in the cold and snow feel a bit daunting? Putting on the hats, mittens, and boots can feel like a lot of work, but it makes the cold temperatures more tolerable.

Try heading out on a sunny day; the sunshine is often an instant mood booster. If you're really struggling, set a timer for 20 minutes and agree to stay out that long. Often everyone is having so much fun when the buzzer goes off, you won't even want to go back in just yet!

Winter Squash



- Warm up with winter squash! It grows in Iowa and is in the gourd family. It's different from summer squash in that it has a hard outer skin, called the rind, that you do not eat.
- Be a brave taster (like we teach the kids in class) and try different kinds of squash.
- Learn how to cut and cook squash from ISU Extension Spend Smart. Eat Smart. (<https://bit.ly/3vz2Kbb>).
- Don't worry about not using it right away; whole, uncut squash will keep in a cool, dark place for a month or longer.
- Enjoy the convenience of canned pumpkin. It's good for baking or can be mixed with vanilla yogurt and topped with granola for a snack.

January

B I N G O

				
Play	Frozen Fruit	Catch	Garbanzo Beans /Chick Peas	Salad Greens
				
Stretch	Build a Fort	Run	Canned Fruit	Squash
				
Frozen Vegetables	Stretch		Snow Angels	Clementines
				
Kiwi	Play	Canned Beans	Squash	Hummus
				
Walk	Edamame	Mango	Bowl	Sled

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Food Preservation

Food preservation is a way to keep fruits and vegetables safe to eat long after they're harvested. It maintains the taste, texture and nutrition of the food as much as possible. If you want to learn how to preserve your own garden produce, contact the ISU Extension office in your county to learn the proper way so that no one gets food poisoning.

You probably eat foods that are preserved all the time. Fruits and vegetables that are canned, frozen, pickled, dried or fermented are preserved. It's easier to eat more fruits and veggies when you eat them in all these different forms.



PLAY YOUR WAY One Hour
a Day

Try Something New!

Hy-Vee Kids Fit has a large online library of kid-friendly at-home fitness videos – all for free! There are fitness-inspired videos along with sports-focused videos and videos that encourage the kids to try something new. Find them online at <https://www.hy-veekidsfit.com/>.



Canned

- Trust in canned fruits and vegetables as healthy options. The fruits and veggies are canned at peak ripeness, when they contain the most nutrients.
- Keep canned fruits and veggies on hand for a quick side dish or snack.



Frozen

- Feel good about buying frozen fruits and veggies. They are full of nutrients comparable to their fresh versions.
- Choose frozen fruits and veggies for a longer shelf-life than fresh, and the best option for some recipes.



Fermented

- Wow your taste buds with fermented cabbage known as kimchi, kraut or curtido.
- Keep your gut healthy with fermented foods. There are many health benefits to eating fermented foods.

February

B I N G O

				
Play	Canned Vegetables	Build	Peppers	Pineapple
				
Dance	Banana	Play	Frozen Vegetables	Kick
				
Curtido, Kimchi or Sauerkraut	Bowl			
				
Canned Fruit	Stretch	Banana	Frozen Fruit	Walk
				
Walk	Peppers	Pickles	Park/Climb	Tomato Sauce

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SNAP

Sometimes families go through hard times. The Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) can help families purchase groceries. To find out if you're eligible, visit <https://hhs.iowa.gov/assistance-programs/food-assistance/snap>. To apply by phone, call (855) 944-3663 from 8:00 a.m. - 5:00 p.m. Monday - Friday.

In Iowa, SNAP can be used to buy most foods like meats and poultry, dairy, fruits and vegetables, and grain products. You can even buy seeds and plants to grow food. Shop online with the SNAP/EBT card at many locations (delivery costs not included).



PLAY YOUR WAY One Hour a Day

Create a Ninja Course!

Turn cabin fever into indoor fun with a build-your-own Ninja course!

- Use couch cushions for obstacles.
- Make a balance beam with tape on the floor.
- Jump from square to square on floor tiles.
- Hit a balloon like a volleyball, fly like a superhero, etc.
- Time each run and try to beat your own time.

Set up boundaries for safety and let the creativity (and energy) flow!



Beans

- Add canned or dried beans to your meals for a good source of fiber and protein. On average, one-half cup of cooked beans has about 7 grams of protein and 7-8 grams of fiber.
- Follow the instructions on the package to prepare dried beans. Canned beans are ready to eat. Rinse and drain them for less sodium and liquid.
- For a quick black bean salsa, mix 1 can black beans (15 ounces, drained and rinsed), 1 ½ cups corn and 1 jar (16 ounces) salsa. (Recipe provided by Iowa State University's Spend Smart. Eat Smart.®)



Corn

- Want your kids to eat their veggies? Eat veggies with your child at the next meal. They learn by watching you.
- Why not serve corn? It's easy to find canned or frozen corn in the winter (or anytime, really) and corn on the cob in the summer. Tip: Learn how to freeze some of that delicious Iowa sweet corn this summer and enjoy it all year.
- Eat corn plain as a side dish or add it to your soup, salsa, taco salad, quesadilla or pancake batter. Finish off Mexican rice with corn on top.

March

B I N G O



Park/Slide



Frozen Peas



Ride a Bike



Dried Beans



Lemon/Lime



Play



Grapefruit



Run



Orange



Walk



Sugar Snap Peas



Stretch



Family
Ate a
Meal
Together



Dribble



Frozen Fruit



Okra



Throw



Clementine



Corn



Park/Climb



Walk



Frozen Vegetable



Canned Fruit



Jump



100% Fruit Juice

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Your Life Iowa

Healthy eating is important, but there are other areas of health that may need to be addressed first. If you or a loved one are facing problems with alcohol, drugs, gambling, mental health or suicidal thoughts, you can turn to Your Life Iowa.

Free and confidential help and information is available by phone (855) 581-8111, by text (855) 895-8398 or online chat at <https://yourlifeiowa.org/>. Not sure if you're at risk? Take our online quiz or check out the warning signs for alcohol, drugs, gambling and mental health. Reach out today! No judgment. Just help.



PLAY YOUR WAY One Hour a Day

Bring the Zoo Home!

April showers may lead to May flowers, but they can make us feel stuck indoors sometimes! Help your kids create an indoor zoo! Try activities such as frog hops, bear walk, starfish jumps, cheetah run, crab crawl, elephant stomps, flap like a bird, slither like a snake, stand like a flamingo, talk like a giraffe, etc. You can even see who can be the most creative. Can you neigh and prance like a unicorn?



Microgreens

- Have you heard of microgreens? They're young vegetable plants. Unlike sprouts, they have leaves, but the leaves are much smaller than baby greens.
- Grow them from a variety of seeds, including broccoli, radish, leafy greens or peas.
- Add them to salads, sandwiches or wraps for extra nutrition and flavor.



Spinach

- Enjoy spring greens, like kale and spinach; they have so many nutrients including vitamins C and A.
- Find them at farmers markets and grocery stores—or grow them. No space for a garden? Use a planter pot on a patio.
- Buy packaged fresh spinach at the store for convenience. Most are labeled “washed” so you don’t need to wash it before eating.



Baby Kale

- Want the health benefits of kale but don't like the strong taste? Try baby kale, which is much milder than regular (curly) kale.
- Mix it in with other salad greens or cook it faster than you would cook regular kale.
- Buy it or try growing this cool-weather plant. It grows well in Iowa.

April

B I N G O



Peach



Walk



Stretch



Park/Swing



Asparagus



Play



Celery



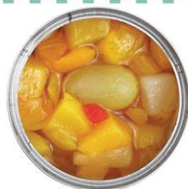
Skate



Rhubarb



Toss



Canned Fruit



Avocado

Family
Ate a
Meal
Together



Play



Spinach or Kale



Skip



Frozen Peaches



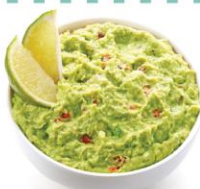
Dance



Locally Grown
Fruit or Veggie



Canned Vegetable



Guacamole



Walk



Microgreens or
Leafy Greens



Fly a Kite



Apricot

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Summer Meals

The end of the school year is an exciting time as kids move on to the next grade and take a break from the normal routine. Healthy lunches don't have to end with the school year, however. Most communities offer free lunches to all children 18 years or younger during the summer. These meals meet nutrition guidelines and help ensure kids don't go hungry.

Look for information from your school about where and when meals will be served. You can also text "Food" or "Comida" (for Spanish) to 304-304 or visit <https://www.fns.usda.gov/summer/sunmeals> and enter your address to find the nearest location. Many meal sites offer fun activities for the kids to do before or after the meal!



PLAY YOUR WAY One Hour a Day

Stay Active This Summer!

Beautiful weather outdoors definitely makes it easier to be active. Take advantage of all your community has to offer. Make a summer bucket list full of local parks, aquatic centers and splash pads, summer reading activities at the library, hikes on local trails and creative games in the yard. Kids will look forward to the activities and checking them off the list. Remember, kids need 60 minutes of physical activity every day—all year long!



Radish

- Enjoy this root veggie while in season. It grows well (and fast!) in Iowa in the spring or fall when it's not too hot. It's ready to harvest 3-5 weeks after planting.
- Like spicy foods? Radishes vary in spiciness depending on the variety. The red ones you find in the grocery store are moderately spicy as far as radishes go. Cook them and they become milder.
- Try another kind of radish popular in Asian dishes. The daikon radish is a longer, white radish that is sweet and mild compared to the small, round red radish.



Turnip

- Did you know that turnips are also a root vegetable? Like radishes, turnips grow underground and are the root of the plant. (You may eat other root veggies, like carrots and potatoes.)
- Choose smaller turnips, which are more tender and taste better.
- Eat them raw in slaws, salads or with a dip. Or, cook them in a variety of ways, such as microwave, bake, roast or sauté.

May

B I N G O

 Walk	 Raspberry	 Play	 Turnip	 Ride a Bike
 Catch	 Plant	 Blueberry	 Walk	 Frozen Vegetable
 Strawberry	 Swing	 Family Ate a Meal Together	 Canned Vegetables	 Radish
 Kale	 Play		 Locally Grown Fruit or Veggie	 Run
 Park/Slide	 Spinach	 Asparagus	 Kick	 Frozen Berries

TO PLAY:

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