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# PARENT TO PARENT

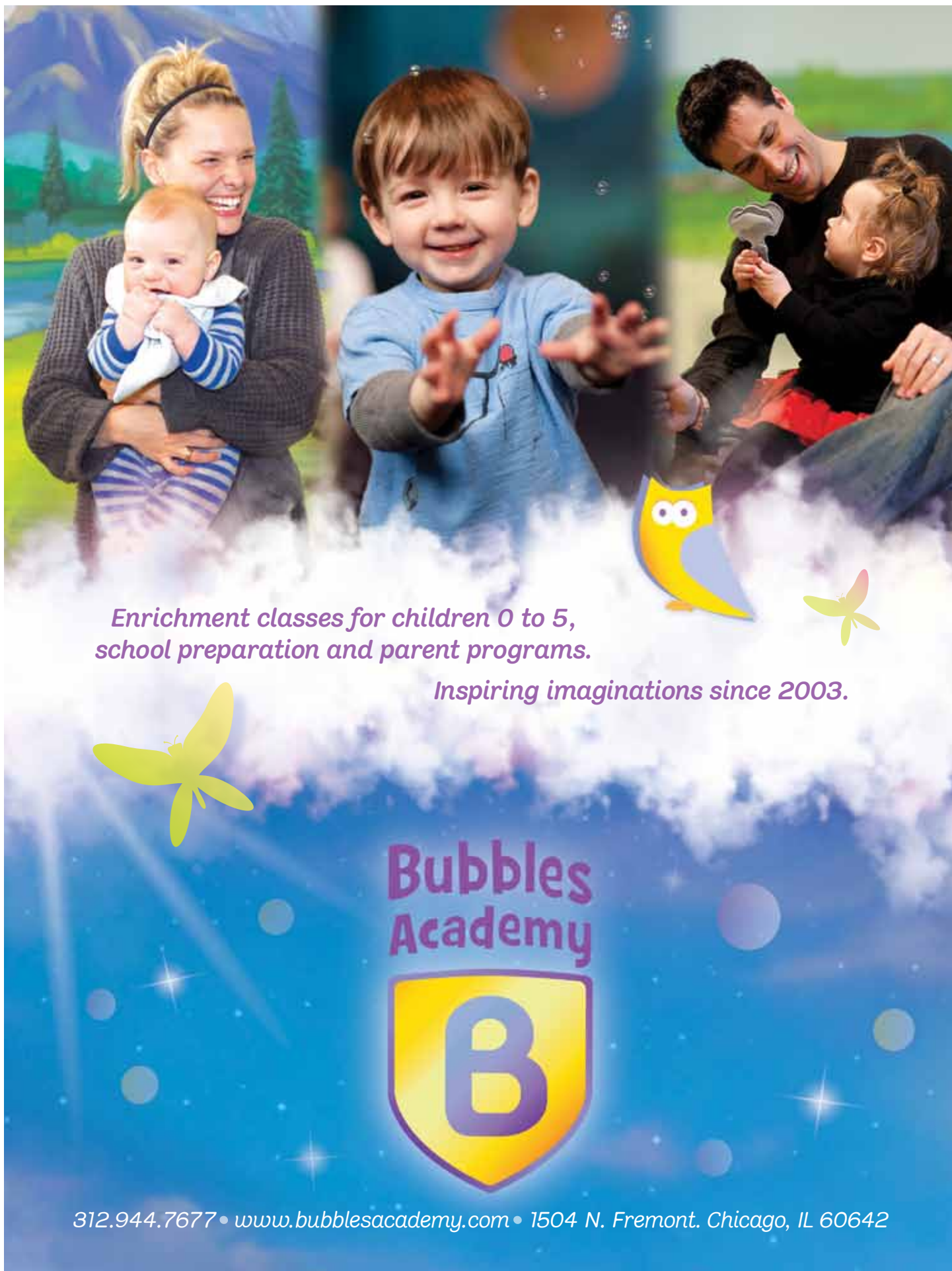
*Winter 2012:  
Staying Healthy*



*Surviving Pukefest*...PAGE 7

*Fun Winter Activities*...PAGE 8


*Curing Winter Blahs in the Kitchen*...PAGE 22



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# OUR MISSION

*Connecting a diverse community of families with the resources they need to navigate parenting in the city*

## PARENT TO PARENT

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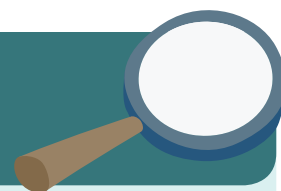
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*Parent to Parent* contains articles and information straight from our NPN member community. For information about editorial submissions, email newsletter@nnpnparents.org; for advertising, email ellie@nnpnparents.org. We look forward to hearing from you!

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### From the Executive Director

Winter. Every year I wonder why we suffer through the bitter cold and endless gray skies and then I remember—we can't live in this great city without it!

For parents, winter presents other challenges, from fighting off cabin fever to dealing with a little one who refuses to bundle up and wants to crawl, toddle or run around outside. My Winter Survival Tips:

- Give yourself a break from the bundling battle. Plan no-coat outings to a store or museum with indoor attached parking.
- Keep a spare pair of gloves/mittens in your car or diaper bag. You never know when you might lose one!
- Cold and wet is the worst! Pack extra pants and socks in ziplock bags for cold toes when your little one gets soaked with snow. Plus: socks double as gloves in a pinch.
- It might not be summer, but you may still need your sunglasses! The glare from snow can be harmful and uncomfortable for little eyes.
- Use the CTA website's Trip Planner and apps like "Buster" and "Transit Stop" to plan how long you'll wait in the cold for the next train/bus.
- Use the NPN Calendar and Parent Perks to create a plan of attack and keep spending to a minimum.

We're all in this together! Our NPN team spends a lot of time working with great local businesses and resources to support you and your family. From play space playdates to a much-needed parents night out, let us help you beat the winter blues and make the most of our Windy City. Get your planner out and visit [nnpnparents.org/calendar](http://nnpnparents.org/calendar) and [nnpnparents.org/parent-perks](http://nnpnparents.org/parent-perks).

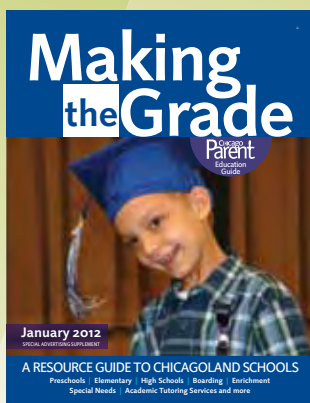
From our NPN family to yours: please have a happy, warm, giggly and safe New Year!





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Healthy Moms and Toddlers .....	Loralynne Evans
Moms BYOB Dinner Club .....	Missy Fotjik
Moms in Business .....	Katherine McHenry/Jenny Perillo
Moms' Night Out .....	Shawna Goelz
Moms Over 35 .....	Marie Lona/Lisa Mendell

Multiples .....	Becky Reno/Melissa Manning/Michelle Gauthreaux
New Moms Over 40 .....	Sarah Squires-Doyle/Pamela Chianelli/Melissa Deroche
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Premies .....	Angela Foll
Same Sex Parents .....	Angela Debello
Saturday Movies .....	Paige Ansehl
Single Parents .....	Angela Kezon
Work from Home .....	Amanda O'Brien/Sarah Wenning
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**What:** NPN Pre-New Year's Eve Family Celebration

**Where:** Lil' Kickers Bradley Place, 2640-B W. Bradley, Chicago

**When:** Sunday, December 30, 2012, 4:30-7:30 pm

**Who:** NPN member families only

Buy your tickets here [nnpnparents.org/events/872](http://nnpnparents.org/events/872) before they sell out!



# THE REALITY OF LIFE AFTER BIRTH

By Seema Venkaachalam Malkani, NPN member since 2010

WHILE WE SPEND SO MUCH TIME PREPARING FOR PRENATAL CARE, WE DON'T USUALLY SPEND AS MUCH TIME CONCENTRATING ON WHAT COMES AFTER.

**"What's going on with my body now?!"** While we spend so much time preparing for prenatal care, we don't usually spend as much time concentrating on what comes after! Sleep-deprived and giddy with excitement about our newborn, sometimes we forget to pay attention to the physical changes that need healing. Let's look at the postpartum body, from toe to head (you'll see why we're going backwards). All these changes apply to both natural and cesarean deliveries unless otherwise noted.

**"Elephant legs!"** This is what we jokingly call the marked swelling of the legs that occurs in the first week after delivery. During your pregnancy, your circulation gained almost a 50 percent increase in volume, and after delivery, that fluid doesn't know where to go. It takes about a week for the diuresis to occur, and moving around helps accelerate that process.

**"What's going on down there?"** This may be the one time in your life you are acutely aware of your perineal region. Whether you had a laceration with a vaginal delivery or have swelling from pushing for three hours and then had a cesarean, you'll be sore. You can wear ice packs as long as you like (not just 24 hours), warm soaks help improve circulation, and sitting on a donut pillow or Boppy pillow helps lessen the pressure on your perineum. Moving around more also helps.

**"Hemorrhoids, yuck!"** Often they are just present, but sometimes they are painful or bleed. Starting hydrocortisone cream and tucks pads generally takes care of most hemorrhoids within three to four weeks, but take prophylactic measures like stool softeners, fiber, pulpy fruits (mangos work really well!) and coconut water, which is a natural laxative.

**"I'm still leaking!"** Postpartum incontinence can last up to three months after delivery. Strengthening the pelvic muscles is the best way to help control it. Kegel exercises and gentle Pilates that strengthen your core work well.

**"My belly still looks like I'm carrying a baby!"** Your abdominal muscles stretched to accommodate your baby and relaxed naturally. Ask your nurse or provider for an abdominal binder that brings the muscles together much faster, and start doing abdominal workouts as soon as your provider allows you.

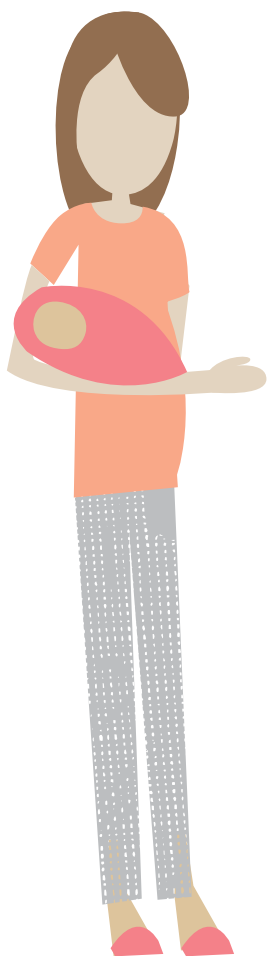
**"I'm going bald!"** Your hair will fall out—in clumps. It will be scary how much hair you lose. This typically happens to the breastfeeding mom around the third month due to decreases in estrogen that allow your milk to develop. The good news: once you stop breastfeeding, it grows back. The bad news: there is no interim treatment because any estrogen therapy decreases your milk supply.

**"I never thought it would be this hard!"** No matter how much others may try to prepare you, a baby is hard work. While it's important to spend time with your newborn to bond, it's important to take time for yourself as well. Take a walk around the block, go get your nails done, read for an hour in a coffee shop. Don't feel guilty having your partner or family take care of the baby for a little while. It's important to clear your mind and remember that being a mom is only one aspect of who you are.

**"It's not all in your head!!"** Don't dismiss postpartum blues or depression. It's a true chemical change that occurs due to fluctuations in hormones and should not be ignored. If you suddenly feel yourself withdrawing from your baby, your spouse, your family or friends; not wanting to get out of bed; or crying for no reason, please let your provider know immediately. The earlier you find help, the better you will be as a mom to your newborn!

Good luck!

Dr. Venkatachalam is an OBGYN at the Northwestern Specialists for Women and a faculty member at Northwestern's School of Medicine. She is also a wife and a mom to Sahana and Aryana, who teach her how to find the work-life balance. Her website is [nswobgyn.com](http://nswobgyn.com).



# SURVIVING PUKEFEST

By Julie Cole, *Mabel's Labels*, NPN member since 2012

**AS SOON AS THE FIRST KID PUKES, ANTICIPATE THAT IT IS JUST THE BEGINNING.**

When you have six kids and a Daddy-o who is out of town, having a tummy bug go through the house is most uncivilized. Last week, I had five pukers in a 48-hour period, with a total of 19 pukes. Yes, I counted. Mostly I counted out of pride. Pride, you ask? Some people beam when their kids get a gold medal in a sport or win a spelling bee. My pride comes from knowing I had 19 rounds of vomit in our house, and every single kid hit a toilet or bucket every single time. No need to hold your applause: \*mama takes a bow\*.

I have a few little tricks for when the plague hits:

## ***Be prepared—treat the healthy kids like they're sick***

- Go on a light diet: as soon as the first kid pukes, anticipate that it is just the beginning. I immediately put the kiddos on a light diet. Dinner becomes soup and toast for everyone—regardless of how healthy they look or feel. We all know what can start just a few hours later in the wee hours of the morning. Personally, I'd rather clean bland food and fluids off the floor than have to face regurgitated spaghetti and meatballs.
- Buckets for everyone: send kids off to bed, each with his/her very own bucket. Remind them if they wake up feeling sick, they should look for the bucket BEFORE wandering around looking for Mama.
- Better still, if you have older kids who can make it to the bathroom, set them up for success. Make sure all bathroom lights are on, all toilet seats are up, and there is a clear path from beds to bathrooms. You don't want a running puker to miss the target by tripping on a fire truck or not finding the light switch.
- Word up the school: tell them if one of your kids wanders into the office complaining of a sore gut, they shouldn't take the "wait and see" approach. Our school secretary was put on alert: if one of my kids turns up looking green in the gills, hand over a bucket and call me immediately.



## ***Have the right equipment***

- Use buckets that have a pouring spout for easy vomit disposal into the toilet. Avoiding those kinds of spills is a top priority.
- Load up on your puker/puker-recovery supplies: Gravol, ginger ale, Gatorade or whatever your little dehydrated people like to consume.

## ***Go into quarantine mode***

- Cancel activities and playdates. Even the most relaxed mamas don't want to take part in this kind of gastrointestinal fun. Pukefest reminds me that I am too slack about my kids sharing water bottles, towels and the occasional toothbrush. Will I ever learn?
- Keep that washing machine going. I'm certainly not the "disinfect toys" kind of gal, but PJs, pillowcases and the "sick bed" laundry need some serious love.

## ***Don't get it yourself***

- Easier said than done, but if you go down, it's all over, Red Rover. The good news is, at a certain point in your mama career, the immune system kicks in and you stop catching it. But plan for some backup support; there's nothing more humbling than wrestling a kid for the puke bucket.

How is your family surviving the latest round of Pukefest? Have you dodged the bullet so far this germy season?

Julie Cole is the co-founder of Mabel's Labels Inc. ([mabelslabels.com](http://mabelslabels.com)) and the proud mom of six. Read her blogs at [mabelhood.com/JulieCole](http://mabelhood.com/JulieCole) and [thebabymachine.com](http://thebabymachine.com). Follow her on Twitter @juliecole



# FUN WINTER ACTIVITIES

By the teachers of Lincoln Park Preschool and Kindergarten, NPN member since 2009



## KINDERGARTEN

### Activity: BANG!

Place words/colors/letters (any concept you are working on) on index cards and then into a bag. Also include a few cards with a picture of a stick of dynamite and the word "BANG!" written on it. Have your child reach into the bag and pull out a card. He names what is on the card and keeps it. Then you do the same. Take turns back and forth. When the word "BANG!" is pulled, all the cards you have earned must go back into the bag and you start over.

This game is good for children of all ages, as the concept focus is easily changed.

## PRE-K

### Activity: Clipboard Number Observations

Think of a special number or number of the day. Give your child a clipboard with paper and ask him to walk around the house/yard/neighborhood and find groupings of that number. So if you are talking about the number 3, he will search for items that are in 3s. When he finds a grouping, he will draw it on the paper. Examples: 3 siblings, 3 photos next to each other, 3 apples on the counter...

This is a great game for children ages four through seven.

## THREES AND FOURS

### Activity: Ice Block Sledding

Fill a casserole dish with water. Lay a piece of rope partially in the pan and partially out, so that it forms a handle or something to hold on either side. Set in the freezer overnight. Once frozen, take it outside and lay a dish towel over it. Let your child sit on the towel and hold the handles. Then, gently push the block and watch it slide.

This is good for ages four through adult!

## TWOS

### Activity: Clothespin Counting

Draw or print out a variety of animal pictures. Cut the pictures, minus the legs. Laminate the pictures if possible for stability, or print on cardstock/cardboard. Give your child a handful of clothespins and the pictures. Show your child an animal and ask him questions about it: "What is this animal? Where do you think it lives? Does it have a tail? Does it have legs? Oh no, we forgot the legs! We can use these clothespins as legs. How many legs does this animal have? Let's count out that many legs and place them on the animal!" Count each leg and help the child attach it to the body of the animal. Continue with the next animal.

This is a great activity for ages two–six.

## ALL AGES

### Activity: Snowmelt

Bring snow or ice block in from outside. Try adding/doing various things to see what makes it melt. Salt? Flour? Sugar? A blow dryer?

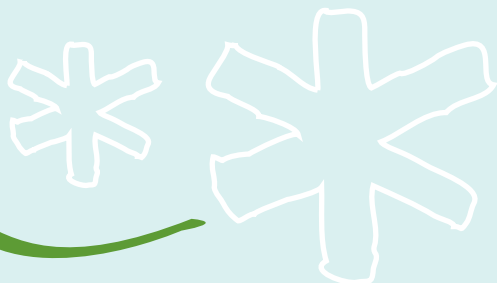
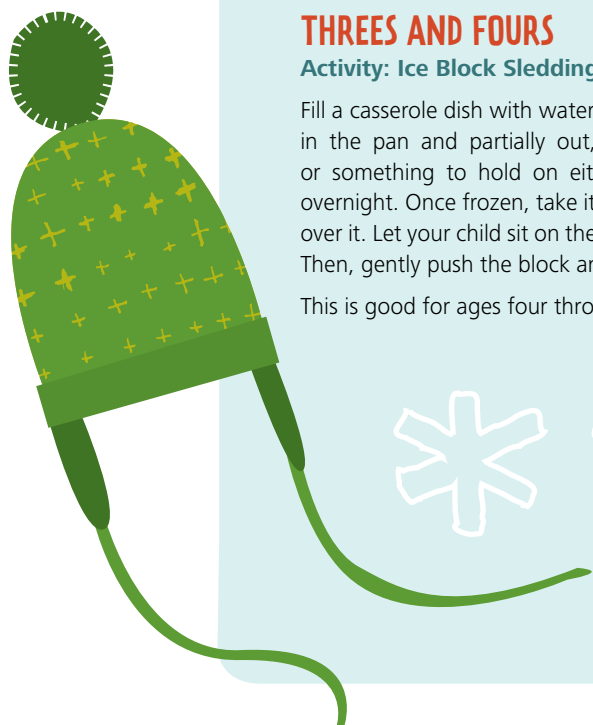
## ALL AGES

### Activity: Language Prompt Box

Cover a shoe box with butcher or construction paper. Wrap bottom and lid separately. Cut a hole in the top that is large enough to put a hand through. Print out and cut apart cards with various language prompts\* and place them in the box. Have children reach in and draw out a card. Use the prompts to ask questions or guide discussions. This is a great way to assess a child's comprehension skills and verbal abilities.

\*Prompts may include questions about a story you read just before using the box, general questions about an experience, favorite things or idea generators. Examples: "Tell about your favorite food." "What was the dog afraid of in the story we read?" "What is a word that rhymes with hat?" "What would you do if you could visit another planet?" "How can you be helpful?"

**Variation:** Instead of prompts or questions, put letters, numbers, shapes or pictures on the card and have children identify. This is a great way to use the box for younger children to practice verbal skills.





## ALL AGES

### Activity: What's Missing?

Collect three to eight items from around the house. Line up items and cover with a blanket. Remove an item while child closes eyes. Have the child guess which object is missing. For a challenge, mix up items or have two colors of the same item.

## AGES THREE TO FIVE

### Activity: Letter Scavenger Hunt

Identify a letter to search for. Brainstorm and write words on cards that begin with that letter (things you can find around your home or neighborhood). Go on a scavenger hunt for these items; hang up the card on the refrigerator once you find the item, or just search for the letter and make tally marks on a card as you search.



## AGES THREE TO SIX

### Activity: Letter Basketball

Cut paper into squares; write a letter (uppercase is best) on each card. Spread letter cards out on the floor. Identify a letter for the child to find. Once he finds the letter, he crumples the paper and shoots it into a basket (trashcan, laundry basket, bucket, etc.).



## AGES TWO TO FIVE

### Activity: GAK

Mix equal parts liquid starch with Elmer's school glue (1 cup each or more for larger batch). Add food coloring if desired.

.....

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# HEALTHY SMILES = HEALTHY CHILDREN

By **Melissa Connell, DDS**, NPN member since 2009

**THE AMERICAN ACADEMY OF PEDIATRIC DENTISTRY RECOMMENDS CHILDREN SEE A DENTIST BY AGE ONE. THOUGH IT'S NOT WRONG TO WAIT A LITTLE LONGER, IT'S BEST FOR THE PATIENT IN THE LONG RUN TO START A LITTLE EARLIER.**

When I worked on the Navajo Reservation for the first four years of my career as a dentist, I saw many pediatric patients. Most had severe dental problems, which reinforced the importance of early intervention in preventing dental caries. I witnessed the significant impact of poor dental health on children's general well-being. As soon as good dental health was restored, they were much healthier and happier. That experience motivated me to specialize in pediatric dentistry.

The average age for a child in Illinois to visit the dentist for the first time is three and a half years old. The American Academy of Pediatric Dentistry recommends children see a dentist by age one. Though it's not wrong to wait a little longer, the guideline is based on experience that it's best for the patient in the long run to start a little earlier.

It might be difficult to imagine what might happen during a one-year-old's visit to the dentist. One of our jobs as pediatric dentists is to protect the emotional experience in the dental environment. It is normal to be anxious and for young children's behavior to be challenging. Our goal is to help a child get used to the environment so that dental appointments are less overwhelming as time passes. Pediatric dentists and their staff focus on the specific needs of the pediatric patient in the dental environment.

Parents ask about the importance of baby teeth, since they eventually fall out. Baby teeth are important because they help with proper chewing and speech, and they hold space for adult teeth. The layers of enamel and dentin are thinner in baby teeth, which means a cavity can progress rapidly toward the nerve in the middle of a baby tooth. Prevention is key, and starting at age one can strengthen prevention measures. Unfortunately, we still see a high rate of cavities in the pediatric population. We strive to keep smiles healthy so kids eat better, sleep better and do better in school.

Here are some of the AAPD's main reasons for recommending the first dentist visit at age one:

- To establish a dental home and create an ongoing dentist-patient relationship inclusive of all aspects of oral health care delivered in a comprehensive, continuously accessible, coordinated and family-centered way
- To review brushing and flossing recommendations
- To review diet recommendations (for example, avoid gummy vitamins!)
- To prepare for the unexpected, like trauma to the teeth; when we've established a relationship with both parent and patient, dealing with trauma is more comfortable than having an emergency be their introduction to the dental environment

Our goal is to create healthy habits for a lifetime. The healthier baby teeth are, the healthier adult teeth will be. All the hard work by parents and their dental health care providers pays off in the long run. As a parent, I simply ask parents to do the best they can with the tools we offer them.

NPN has helped to spread the good word about pediatric dentistry and early dental intervention. As both a business owner and a parent, I feel fortunate to have the amazing NPN support system and its resources to find great information about all things Chicago!

## Resources

aapd.org  
dentistby1.com

Dr. Melissa Connell is the owner and one of the pediatric dentists at Children's Dentistry of Bucktown & Wicker Park. She and her husband Bob live in Bucktown with their children Stella and Zoe. Her practice offers workshops to teach parents more about pediatric oral health care.

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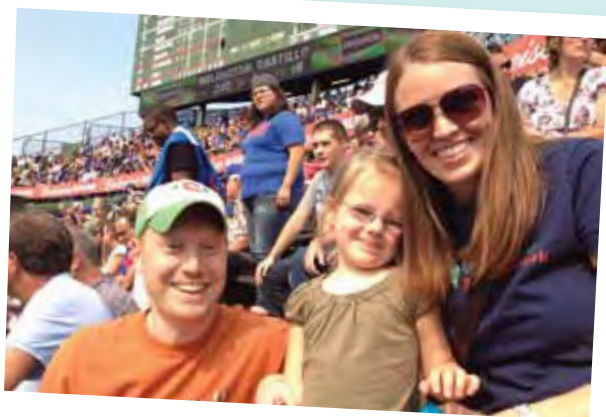


# SOCIAL SNAPSHOT

## CONNECTING CHICAGO PARENTS

### SOCIAL SCENE

### OUT AND ABOUT WITH NPN MEMBERS AND VOLUNTEERS



NPN Family Day at Chicago Cubs Game



New Member Mingle at Bubbles Academy  
Photo by Annemarie Zelasko Photography.



NPN South Side Preschool and Elementary School Fair  
Photo by Jazi Photo.



Moms in Business Networking Event at Prak Sis  
Photo by Eva Ho Photography.





**Fit & Healthy B4 and After Baby  
Active Moms at Athleta**

Photos by Bum Bul Bee Photo + Films.



**Lincoln Square-North Center Club at Lil Sluggers**  
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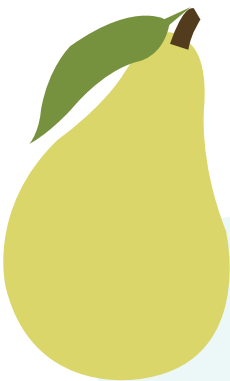
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See your local Play & Music location for other restrictions and details.

# MOM'S NIGHT OUT: WHO KNEW MAKING HEALTHY BABY FOOD WOULD BE THIS FUN?

By Colleen O'Laughlin, NPN member since 2011

WHILE MOST MOMS KNOW THAT HOMEMADE IS BEST, SOMETIMES THEY NEED A LITTLE PUSH TO MAKE IT HAPPEN.



Whether I was anticipating the unknowns of labor and delivery or wondering how I would adjust to my new life as a mom or even debating baby names with my husband, there were few things I knew to be certain while pregnant. However, there was one thing I always knew to be certain: I would make my own baby food! For me, this was a no-brainer. As a former culinary student who spends the majority of my free time buried in my kitchen, for me it was a win/win situation: I could dedicate my time to my passion for cooking and provide the healthiest food for my baby.

While the decision was easy for me, when I joined an NPN New Moms group, I was surprised to learn that preparing homemade baby food does not come easily for other moms. When the babies in our group were ready to start solid foods, I hosted a "puree party" to offer pointers on making baby food. The party was a huge success! Besides having a great time, each mom walked away with a colorful variety of organic, freezable baby food, confident she could put her skills into practice. That night I learned, while most moms know that homemade is best, sometimes they need a little push to make it happen.



Photo courtesy Colleen O'Laughlin.

After the success of that first party, I expanded the idea to include "Stock the Freezer" parties for expecting and new moms. What better way to keep your family eating right when your new baby arrives than to stock your freezer with easy, healthy meals? Well-meaning friends and family bringing casserole (after casserole) is always appreciated during those first few hectic weeks. But too many heavy lasagnas, meat loafs and pot pies aren't always what your family or postnatal body needs. Stocking your freezer not only ensures you have the meals you want when you arrive home from the hospital, it's also easier on your partner, who might otherwise have to navigate a grocery list you scribbled with one eye open at 3 a.m. "Stock the Freezer" parties are also a great baby shower idea for the expecting mom whose schedule (or lack of skills!) prevent her from cooking.

My prenatal yoga instructor said, "What's good for mom is good for baby," and I try my best to live by this mantra. As a mom, it's natural to put your family's needs ahead of your own, and before you know it, you haven't had a night to yourself in months. Puree and "Stock the Freezer" parties are great ways to get out, have a glass of wine, socialize with other moms, learn to prepare healthy meals for baby and family and leave feeling empowered to do it all on your own!

Making your own baby food may be right for you:

- **Get to know your kitchen equipment.** Sometimes, half the battle is taking that food processor out of the box.
- **Do the math.** Apart from the nutritional benefits, making your own organic baby food can save you **more than half** of what you might spend on pouches and jars.
- **Give it a whirl.** You may not realize just how easy it can be.
- **Go green.** Making homemade baby food is an easy way to reduce your carbon footprint and ensure you'll take the recycling out less often.
- **Have fun.** It doesn't have to be overwhelming. Grab your girlfriends and make it a night.

Colleen O'Laughlin lives in Roscoe Village with her husband Brian and their seven-month-old son Rory. As a former event planner and teacher turned stay-at-home mom, Colleen now hosts puree and "Stock the Freezer" parties all over the city. For more information or to plan a party, email [olaughlincolleen@gmail.com](mailto:olaughlincolleen@gmail.com)



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# CHOOSING WHO WILL TAKE CARE OF YOUR CHILDREN IF YOU CAN'T – A LESSON IN COMPROMISE

By Jennifer Guimond-Quigley, NPN member since 2010, NPN board member since 2011

WHILE GETTING THE FINANCIAL ASPECT OF OUR PLANNING FIGURED OUT WASN'T TOO COMPLICATED, THE AREA REQUIRING THE MOST THOUGHT AND CARE WAS CHOOSING GUARDIANS FOR OUR "FUTURE BORNs."

As an estate planning attorney, I am obsessed with planning for life's many contingencies. My clients' files are backed up in so many places I've lost track. I have all my electronic passwords written down and sealed in an envelope containing the instruction "OPEN ONLY IN AN EMERGENCY" in a fireproof safe. Not surprisingly, my husband and I had our estate plan in place prior to becoming pregnant with our first child, complete with the designated guardians to take care of any future-born children. While getting the financial aspect of our planning figured out wasn't too complicated, the area requiring the most thought and care was choosing guardians for our "future borns." As we went through the process, and as I have guided my clients through it, a few key pointers have emerged:

1. **Nobody (I repeat: NOBODY) can ever take your place.** The problem with choosing an appropriate guardian for your child can be that nobody meets your criteria. Save yourself the grief and know that it is highly unlikely you will identify the perfect person



Photo courtesy Jennifer Guimond-Quigley.

because, after all, that person is not you. Develop a short list of candidates, then list your core values and beliefs and see how the proposed guardians stack up. You will likely choose the person who is the most similar to you in his/her beliefs and parenting qualities that you admire, but understand whoever you designate to care for your children will likely not possess everything you'd like.

2. **You don't have to give the guardian the money to manage as well.** I have spoken to many parents with the following issue: They feel confident they've chosen the right person or persons for the day-to-day care of their children, but that person can't balance a checkbook. That's okay. You don't have to name the same person as guardian of the child and guardian of the money (estate). If your brother-in-law is a savvy investor whose fiscal management aligns well with yours, and your best friend is a nurturer who has formed an impenetrable bond with your children, appoint them both. They will thank you for giving them the roles they excel in and naming someone else to help with the rest.
3. **Have the conversation with the guardian(s) ahead of time.** Regardless of whether you name the same person to be in charge of the money and care or whether you name multiple guardians, ask them the tough question. While it may sting to hear it, if the answer is "no," you want to make sure they are willing and able to take on this monumental role for you. If the person can't commit, thank him/her for being honest and move on to the next in line.

After going through our checklist of criteria, what ended up mattering the most to my husband and me was that our guardians be loving, stable family members and that our child be raised as a "city kid." Luckily, my brother and his fiancée fit the bill and said yes. Here's hoping no one ever finds out if our instincts were right.

Jennifer Guimond-Quigley resides in Chicago with her husband Chris and their 10-month-old daughter Neve. She is also the principal of the Law Office of Jennifer Guimond-Quigley, concentrating in estate planning, probate and family law.





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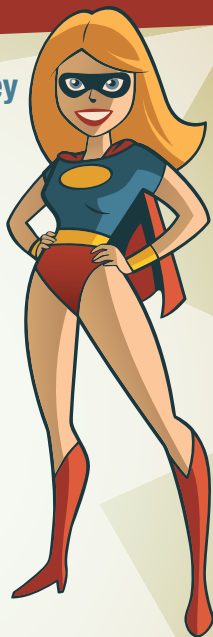
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# EMPTY FRIDGE AND POTATO CHIPS: REMEMBERING THE EARLY NEW MOM DAYS

By **Merav Benson**, NPN member since 2010

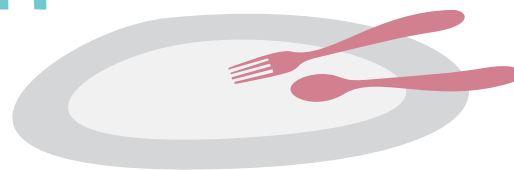
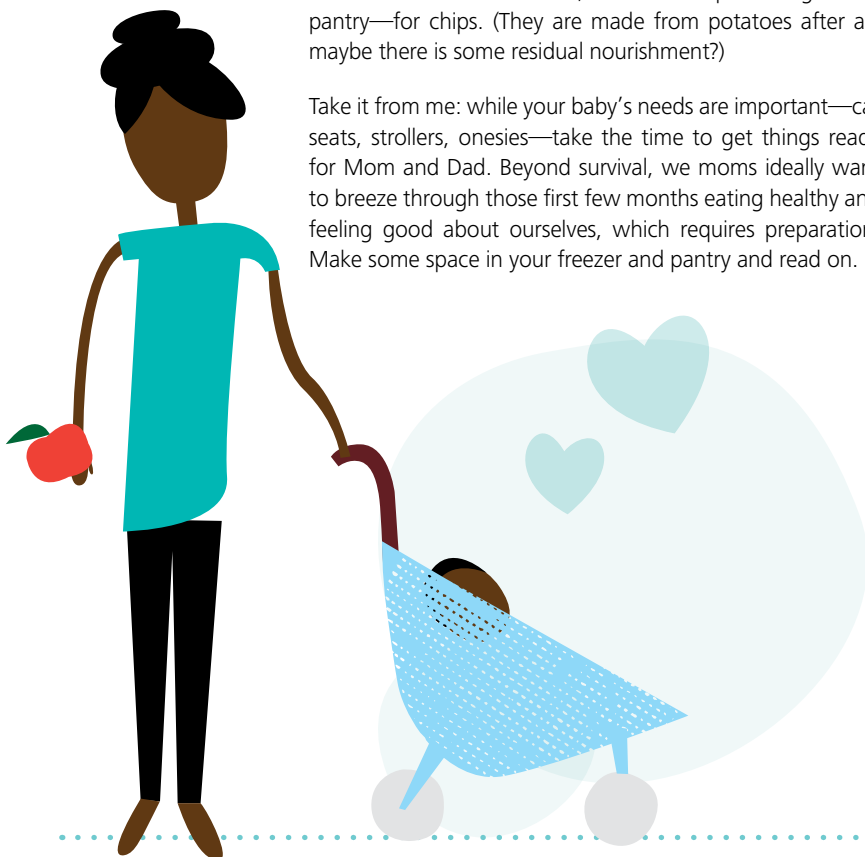
**EVEN THOUGH IT'S NATURAL TO THINK ABOUT YOUR BABY FIRST, IT'S ALSO IMPORTANT TO TAKE CARE OF YOURSELF.**

Ahh...the early days of being a new mom. Whether it's your first or you have others, it can be an overwhelming time! Even though it's natural to think about your baby first, it's also important to take care of yourself. I learned that the hard way.

My daughter is two, but I can still vividly remember being up at 4 a.m. for a feeding, starving and exhausted. I remember opening the refrigerator with one hand, the baby in the other, trying to figure out what I could eat that was actually nutritious without risking even more crying by putting my baby down.

There wasn't much in there, so I ended up heading to the pantry—for chips. (They are made from potatoes after all; maybe there is some residual nourishment?)

Take it from me: while your baby's needs are important—car seats, strollers, onesies—take the time to get things ready for Mom and Dad. Beyond survival, we moms ideally want to breeze through those first few months eating healthy and feeling good about ourselves, which requires preparation. Make some space in your freezer and pantry and read on.



## **Make or stock up on some foods ahead of time**

Casseroles are great, but not the easiest to eat while holding your baby. Try to have foods on hand that are easy to eat!

### **Buy**

For the freezer, pick up veggie burgers, waffles, mini-calzones or mini quiches. For the fridge: cottage cheese, yogurt and hummus.

### **Make**

- Wraps that don't leak or get soggy are great (e.g., hummus and veggie wrap), nutritious smoothies, peanut butter and jelly sandwiches, cut-up fruits and veggies—crank these out when the baby is sleeping and you'll be set for the rest of the day. Or you can buy some pre-made.
- If you have tots at home, try mac and cheese muffins: just make your favorite mac and cheese recipe, bake them in muffin tins and freeze them. That way, you'll have a meal everyone will love—and you can actually eat!

## **Stock up on healthy snack foods that are easy to eat**

Don't end up with a pantry full of only chips! With a new baby around, you've got to think beyond meal times since often you'll be hungry at crazy hours.

- Some great snack foods to have on hand are trail mix, granola bars or mixed nuts; they are filling and give you energy.
- Since it's hard to keep fresh fruit around when you're not at the grocery store as often, try freezing bananas and putting them on a popsicle stick or freezing grapes so they last longer.

With some preparation, you can take care of baby and parents. Enjoy this wonderful time with your new baby!

Merav Benson lives in Roscoe Village. She joined NPN when her daughter was born and found it to be a great resource—and now she has another baby on the way! She is the founder of Moment for Mom ([momentformom.com](http://momentformom.com)), a meal delivery service for new moms in Chicago.



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# HOW WORKING PARENTS STAY SANE

By Jessica Worny Janicki, NPN member since 2007

**WHETHER YOUR WORK IS PAID, UNPAID OR A MIX OF BOTH, DEVELOPING YOUR TALENTS THROUGH WORK CONTRIBUTES TO SOCIETY.**

I've been a parent for nine years and a career/executive coach for 11. I've worked full-time, compressed time, part-time and stay-at-home schedules. I've made dinner during conference calls and returned emails while walking to school pickup. How did people do this before the iPhone?

Luckily I've had fantastic role models and NPN as a resource to help me hold onto my sanity as a working parent. Here are three things that help me stay happy and healthy during the craziest of weeks.

## **Engage your sense of purpose**

Work is not just about income. We are born with natural talents and abilities—just look at your kids! Whether your work is paid, unpaid or a mix of both, developing your talents through work contributes to society.

One working mother summarized her roles of mom, employee and volunteer this way: "It's more about the importance of being a good global citizen...my life is useful when I've volunteered, worked...or been of service to others."

When your kids question why you have to work or miss an event, tell them how your work benefits others and who needs you there. Teach your children that work is measured by more than a paycheck, and you'll start believing it.

## **Put family communication on your list**

A client was struggling to find that sense of purpose as a manager in a steel manufacturer. The environment conflicted with his core values, and the industry turbulence worried him. Yet he was afraid to let his family down by quitting his job to return to school.



Photo courtesy Jessica Worny Janicki.

He's not alone. Most industries have experienced change during the past two decades, altering or eliminating career paths. Your work/life arrangement will probably change. And as our careers have become less predictable, so have our roles at home.

Are you making assumptions about who will take care of what? Dedicate time to discuss household and parenting jobs, just as you schedule project meetings at work. Consider a weekly planning session, or move your family calendar to "the cloud." Institute family meetings, and let your kids know what to expect each week. Ask older kids for their ideas and help managing schedule conflicts—what they come up with might surprise you.

As for my client, he left his job, and his wife became the sole provider while he completed his degree. Today he works part-time on swing shift as a critical care nurse. Every month the couple plans and renegotiates responsibilities around their changing schedules. His wife says, "He should have quit years earlier! Our relationship is stronger, and our family is running better because we talk about what to expect all the time. I even go to yoga more often."

## **Play the long game**

During my first pregnancy, a working mom told me: "Don't look for balance every week because it won't be there. Look for balance over months and years."

True confession: I missed my daughter's first science fair. My scientist husband told me not to worry because he would be there. After all, he's far more qualified to set up her poster (and secretly evaluate the rest). I still felt guilty and promised I would be there next year.

The following year, I was scheduled to teach a workshop during the fair. I took a very deep breath, summoned my courage and asked my client to reschedule. She was able to change the date, I went to the fair, and I delivered a good workshop the following week.

Had I judged my parenting on that long day of the first science fair, I might have come up short. But looking back, I did a pretty good job balancing my business with my daughter over time.

An author and coach worried that her dedication to work shortchanged her children as they grew up. She asked how they felt about it as young adults: "The response was overwhelmingly positive! They respected my work and found it interesting...I think most parents balance things better than they think."

Jessica Worny Janicki helps people and organizations develop their talent. She is building her business, JWW Consulting LLC, mostly part-time. Jessica joined NPN before she moved to Chicago in 2007. When she isn't working, cooking or volunteering, you'll find her at American Girl Place with her two daughters.

# CURING WINTER BLAHS IN THE KITCHEN

by **Carly Ubersox**, *NPN member since 2008*



**TO MAKE THOSE FROSTY WINTER AFTERNOONS MORE TOLERABLE AND MORE FUN, MY TWO DAUGHTERS JOIN ME FOR CULINARY CREATIVITY IN OUR KITCHEN.**

The winter months in Chicago always guarantee several things: cold, snow and long dark days. As parents we say goodbye to our outdoor hangouts and prepare to stay cozy indoors for what seems like forever. To make those frosty winter afternoons more tolerable and more fun, my two daughters join me for culinary creativity in our kitchen.

I've always loved wholesome food and cooking, even before my kids were born. When they were old enough to help in some small way, they assisted me with all kinds of recipes. Sometimes that meant tossing pre-measured or pre-chopped ingredients into a big bowl and stirring; other times it was as simple as asking them to be official taste-testers (we have a rule in our house

to taste everything before you refuse it). My youngest daughter's egg allergy forced me to put an even greater emphasis on fruits and vegetables, not just decorative cookies or anything-goes frittatas, both of which are winter staples. So we began experimenting with egg-free (but still delicious and creative) recipes.

I avoid anything overly processed and focus on using simple ingredients, but anything that allows the kids to be inventive with what they eat can preempt a blah afternoon and shorten the familiar "witching hour." The next time cold temperatures keep you at home, trade your play-dough for playtime with food. It's a great way to fill time before dinner—then dinner is served! Maybe with dessert!



Photo courtesy Carly Ubersox.

## BANANA MUFFINS

(inspired by Claire Robinson's cookbook *5 Ingredient Fix*)

I adapted this recipe to be egg-free and to accommodate different mix-ins. Let the kids help measure and mix ingredients by hand, then they choose what to add. Mine prefer mini-chocolate chips, but a cup of golden raisins or tiny cubes of apple would be yummy, too.

### Ingredients

- 1 stick unsalted butter
- 3 to 4 ripe bananas
- 1/3 cup agave nectar or honey
- 1 large egg or 1 tbsp. ground flaxseed
- 1 1/4 cups whole wheat flour
- 1 1/2 tsp. baking powder
- 1/2 tsp. salt
- 1 cup mini-chocolate chips or chopped walnuts

Preheat oven to 375°. Line a 12-cup muffin tin with paper or tinfoil liners. If you're using ground flaxseed, mix it with 3 tbsp. warm water and let sit for 5–10 minutes, or until the water is absorbed slightly and it has the consistency of raw egg.

Melt the butter in a small saucepan over medium heat, stirring occasionally, until it turns a nutty golden brown and fragrant. Take off heat to cool.

Mash up the bananas and mix in agave syrup (or honey) and combine well—it should be liquefied. Pour in the butter and whisk together. Mix in the egg (or soaked flaxseed). Add all the dry ingredients and stir to combine, but don't over-mix. Last, fold in the chocolate chips or nuts.

Divide evenly among muffin cups. Bake in center of oven for about 25 minutes. Cool in pan for 5 minutes; empty onto rack to cool completely.

## DESIGN AND EAT A "RAINBOW"

(2–4 SERVINGS)

Let your kiddies create a colorful, edible masterpiece. Trying different color themes is part of the fun, so mix in whatever veggies or fruits you like.

### Ingredients

- 2 whole wheat English muffins, split open
- 4 tbsp. your favorite pizza sauce (we love locally made, all-natural Pastorelli's)
- 1/4 cup red grape tomatoes, halved
- 1/2 orange pepper, chopped into small pieces
- 1/2 yellow squash, sliced thin and chopped into small pieces
- 1/4 cup broccoli florets, blanched for 2 min. in boiling water, drained (or thawed frozen)
- 1/4 cup shredded mozzarella or Parmesan cheese

Preheat broiler on low. Place the muffins cut side up on a baking sheet lined with foil. Top each with sauce and arrange veggies in a rainbow pattern on top. Sprinkle with cheese. Broil for 2 minutes or until cheese melts. Or skip the oven and cheese for a fruit version: mix 6 oz. of room temp. cream cheese with 2 tbsp. honey, spread on whole wheat pitas, top with sliced fruit in a rainbow of colors! Strawberries, bananas, kiwi, blueberries, grapes—you get the idea.

.....

Carly Ubersox lives in Bucktown with her husband and two daughters. She is passionate about the whole foods movement and hopes her children's book *Phoebe the Foodie* inspires little ones to love and appreciate fresh, real foods. Visit [phoebethefoodie.com](http://phoebethefoodie.com) for resources and more recipes.



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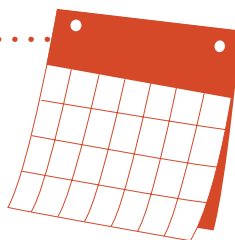
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