

# Laugh and LEARN

## January 2025 Parent Packet

Check your parent packets for new info each month. And you'll get some additional information in your inbox each week after the program...stay tuned and make sure you're checking those emails!



## Next Play Date

Friday, February 21 | 9:00AM  
Grayson County Extension Office

### Cooperative Extension Service

Agriculture and Natural Resources  
Family and Consumer Sciences  
4-H Youth Development  
Community and Economic Development

### MARTIN-GATTON COLLEGE OF AGRICULTURE, FOOD AND ENVIRONMENT

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# Food Additives Often Found in Children's Food and Drinks

Food additives have been around for centuries. The U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) has approved more than 10,000 additives for food processing. These include colorings, flavorings, and preservatives which help improve taste, texture, and shelf life. Many of these additives were developed to keep the American food supply safe and/or make the products more enjoyable for consumers.

Children often consume food with artificial colors, sweeteners, preservatives, and flavor enhancers. Generally, these additives are safe in small amounts, but too much of anything can be harmful.

Many snacks and drinks contain artificial food colors to make them bright and appealing to children. These food colors or food dyes were made in a lab. They are used most often in candies, fruit-flavored snacks, breakfast cereals, and powdered drink mixes. Some studies suggest that removing artificial food colors from children's diets may result in improvement in behavior in children with attention deficit hyperactivity disorder. However, more research is needed to understand how these additives affect behavior. Because of this concern, we are seeing more products for kids that include natural colors that are made from fruits and vegetables. We do not yet have studies comparing artificial and natural-colored foods.

Another common type of additive is nitrates and nitrites, which are often used as preservatives in processed meats like hot dogs, deli meats, bacon, sausage, and canned meats. It's important to note that nitrates and nitrites occur naturally in vegetables, too. However, these naturally occurring versions have not been linked with any health risks. A diet high in these processed meats has been linked to an increased risk of cancer. To reduce this risk and support overall health, minimize the amount of processed meat your child eats.

Some additives are used to enhance the flavor of food and drink. This includes monosodium glutamate (MSG). MSG is used to enhance a savory or umami flavor. It's often added to soups, salty snacks, and soy sauce. Another example is the artificial sweetener, aspartame. Aspartame is used to increase the sweetness of a food or drink without adding calories and is often found in sugar-free products. The FDA recognizes these flavor enhancers as safe (GRAS).

Researchers continue to study the possible effects of food additives on health. The American Academy of Pediatrics recommends limiting children's exposure to some of these additives because they might be more affected compared to adults because of their smaller body size. There is growing interest in how these additives might affect development, hormones, and risk of obesity in children.

Minimizing foods with artificial coloring, limiting processed meat, and limiting the amount of food additives can support overall health. Prioritizing nutrient-dense foods, like lean meat, fruits and vegetables, whole grains, and dairy can support children's growth and development.

## References:

Trasande, L., Shaffer, R. M., Sathyanarayana, S., & COUNCIL ON ENVIRONMENTAL HEALTH (2018). Food Additives and Child Health. *Pediatrics*, 142(2), e20181410. <https://doi.org/10.1542/peds.2018-1410>

Savin, M., Vrkatić, A., Dedić, D., Vlaški, T., Vorgučin, I., Bjelanović, J., & Jevtic, M. (2022). Additives in Children's Nutrition-A Review of Current Events. *International journal of environmental research and public health*, 19(20), 13452. <https://doi.org/10.3390/ijerph192013452>

American Academy of Pediatrics. (2019). Food Additives: What Parents Should Know. [HealthyChildren.org. https://www.healthychildren.org/English/healthy-living/nutrition/Pages/Food-Additives.aspx](https://www.healthychildren.org/English/healthy-living/nutrition/Pages/Food-Additives.aspx)

Moyer, L. (2024, August 29). Healthy cereals for kids with no food dyes. Center for Science in the Public Interest. <https://www.cspinet.org/article/healthy-cereals-kids-no-food-dye>

**Source:** Anna Cason, Senior Extension Associate for Food and Nutrition

# Activity Corner



## Melted Snowman Art

### Supplies:

- paper (cardstock works best)
- white paint
- googly eyes
- snowman parts
- glue (if you place parts after paint dries)
- paint brush, sponge, etc. anything to spread the paint!

1. Cut out the snowman parts, provided. (hat, scarf, buttons, nose, arms.)
2. Paint a white blob on the brown paper, provided.
3. Arrange the google eyes and other snowman parts over your white paint to make it appear the snowman has melted! Use glue to attach parts if your paint dries too quickly!
4. Be creative!! There's no right or wrong way! Let your child lead and see where it takes them!



## Moon Dough Recipes

only 2 ingredients!

### Parents | PLEASE READ

Cornstarch and conditioner are provided. For a “taste friendly” option see the second recipe!

This is messy and will need adult supervision and help...but smells great and cleans up super easily with a wet rag and water!

Dough will dry out unless stored in an air-tight container. Mason jars with a lid and ring are perfect.

Once ingredients are mixed you can add glitter or food coloring to add a pop of color to your dough!

### Ingredients:

#### Corn Starch & Conditioner (*lotion would work too!*)

- Mix 1/2 cup corn starch (provided) with 1/4 cup conditioner (provided) in small mixing bowl. Use a spoon or rubber spatula to mix ingredients together. Once combined, use hands to knead and mix until a dough forms. If too dry, add more conditioner, if too wet add more corn starch until you have a stretchy dough that can be shaped into a ball.

### Taste Friendly Version

#### Flour & Oil

- Use the same ratios, ingredients, and methods as above, just using all purpose flour and vegetable oil.

