



# Family

## 12 “Three-Word” Tips to Alleviate Daily Parenting Stress

### March

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
				1 Preschool Storytime	2 Sky Zone Sports - Toddler Time	3
4	5 Money Mixer	6 Sago Build	7 Breakfast @ IHOP	8 Walk & Play at Sells	9 Preschool Open Gym	10
11	12 Baby Laptime	13 Egg Kite	14 Wacky Wednesday	15 Preschool Storytime	16 Tyke Time	17
18	19 Playgroup	20 Bowling	21 Breakfast & Play at Chick-fil-A	22 Science Experiment	23 Tyke Time	24
25	26 Book Club	27 Playtime at Geotrax	28 Zoo Day	29 Cafe	30 Play at the Park	31

1. **Write it down.** Dates and times for doctor appointments, when library books are due, scheduled oil changes, children’s recitals... write them ALL down!

2. **Get up earlier.** Complete as many tasks as you can the night before. If you still notice your family running late for school or barely making it to work on time, you might need to set the alarm earlier and allow extra time for everybody to get moving and ready.

3. **Do nothing sometimes.** Take time to just “be”- and then don’t feel guilty about it. What’s thirty more minutes of dirty laundry while you watch the ending of a movie on TV, relax in a warm bath, or finish a chapter of a good book?

4. **Learn to delegate.** Assign age-appropriate tasks to others in the house, and then accept imperfections when they don’t compromise your family’s health or well-being. The towels might not be folded exactly as you would have folded them yourself, but exhale and be thankful that you don’t have to fold tonight.



5. **Focus on today.** Don’t spend your todays worrying about things that might or might not happen tomorrow. Enjoy the beauty (and occasional chaos) that surrounds you in the here and now, trusting that you will find the energy and the wisdom to tackle tomorrow’s issues when they arrive.

6. **Make weekends count.** Leave time for relaxation and unscheduled time. This allows you to wind-down after your busy, fast-paced weeks. Don’t overbook yourselves and your children. Find the balance between activities and downtime.



7. **Speak positive words.** Remind yourself that you are a good parent, a good person, that you love your family, and that your family loves you. Stay away from self-insults and “I can’t” conversations with yourself. These only bring you down.

8. **Do for others.** Find someone who could use your assistance. Collect items to donate to a family in need or visit a family friend in the nursing home. Sometimes looking at other people’s situations can make us feel more appreciative of what we have.

9. **Talk about it.** Keep a circle of trusted friends close by. Talking things out can make us feel better. Even if no “solution” is reached, sometimes it’s just good to open up and share your feelings. Good friends can usually get us to laugh about something even when the situation looks dark.

10. **Move around more.** Exercise relieves stress, and it helps to fight off conditions that could cause us more stress if they enter our lives. A brisk 20-minute walk with a friend- or with your favorite music- can help erase some of the day’s stress and help us be healthier.



11. **Get it fixed.** Anything that is a “ticking time bomb”- like a tire that is going bad or a leak in your bathroom- needs attention before it becomes a major problem. It reduces stress to address problems now instead of waiting until they become more expensive and more time consuming issues.

12. **Do it now!** Procrastination causes stress. If you can take care of something now and check it off the list, do it! Seeing a to-do list with items checked off gives us a sense of empowerment and confirms that we are on the road to taking care of business.

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# Caring for your child's teeth

Tooth decay affects children more than any other chronic infectious disease. Untreated tooth decay causes pain and infections that may lead to many other problems. The good news is that tooth decay and other oral diseases that can affect children are preventable. Developing good habits at an early age helps children get a good start on a lifetime of healthy teeth and gums.



Now more than ever, kids are faced with a large array of food choices. Their choices range from fresh fruits and vegetables to sugary and processed foods. What children eat not only affects their general health but also their oral health



Children are consuming foods and drinks high in sugar more often and in larger portions than ever before. If a person drinks one soda a day for a year, that person is consuming approximately 55 pounds of sugar and half of all children consumer at least one soda per day. When sugar is consumed over and over again in large amounts, the harmful effect on teeth can be vast. Sugar on teeth provides food for bacteria, the bacteria then produces acid and this acid in turn can eat away the enamel on teeth.

Sugar cannot and should not be completely avoided. Many foods with sugar also have important nutrients that need to be consumed. The best way to know if the food you are eating has sugar is to read the food label. The American Heart Association recommends that the average child should consume less than 24 grams of sugar per day.

Here are some tips for reducing your children risk for tooth decay:

- ≈ If your children chew gum, make it sugarless.
- ≈ Monitor beverage consumption –children should consume water and milk more than sodas.
- ≈ Help children develop good brushing and flossing habits.
- ≈ Schedule regular dental visits.

For more information see your dentist or contact UT Extension for more information.

Contributed by: Schancey Chapman  
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Sources: [ada.org](http://ada.org) & [heart.org](http://heart.org)

# FUN AFFORDABLE SPRING FAMILY EXCURSIONS



Do you ever find yourself wanting to spend time with your family, create some bonding experiences, memories to last a lifetime...but find that funds are limited or time is short? It's time to turn off the TV power off the computers and turn off the cell phones. Getting actively involved in your children's lives will benefit them socially, educationally and emotionally! Research has shown that children have a more successful life and are more balanced if they have parental involvement.

According to the Parental Rights foundation children who have parental support are likely to have better health as adults, earn higher grades, have better social skills and more likely to continue education, they are also more likely to be socially competent and have better communication skills as well as less likely to engage in smoking, drinking or drug usage. Getting to spend family time together doesn't have to be expensive or that hard to plan! Consider the age of your children, the resources available to you and what will bring your family closer together. To get your creativity flowing here are a few different ideas for an afternoon or weekend of fun!

≈ Treasure Hunt – while this may sound juvenile or too simplistic, spice it up by hiding a surprise at the end of the hunt and make the clues easier or more complex based on age. Sample surprises could be a picnic basket for dinner afterwards, a box full of chocolates, their allowance for that week, etc. Also, another way of making it more exciting, try only giving them part of the map and then find clues along the way that lead to the destination. All that's required is...some planning time and a surprise!!



≈ Dinner Time – take some extra time to plan a meal when ALL family members are present. Make it special, but not expensive...and leaving all electronic devices in another room, enjoy the family time to talk about the day and what's going on in each other's lives. Assign clean-up to groups, so the fun continues and everyone stays together.

≈ Water Fun – have a creek nearby? Take the family to the creek to have a contest to see who can find the most unique, smooth, and pretty item (bragging rights to anyone who catches a live creature!). While you're down there...see if you could start a water fight!!

≈ Day at the Park – Select a Saturday, take the afternoon to go and play at the park from after lunch until late evening. Parks often have playgrounds, tracks, tennis or basketball courts, hiking trails, bike trails and covered pavilions (for rainy days or to eat under). Another good piece of news...most parks are free of cost!! Spend the afternoon playing together, eat dinner that night (maybe get a campfire going, if it's allowed) and find a mystery or adventure story and read aloud. Once the stars come out, go on a starry night hike and then head home for a good night's rest!



≈ Old-Fashioned Night – time to pull out your childhood memories or memories from your grandparent's time. Select an old film (it can be black and white), find a card game you used to play but haven't played in years (Rook, Hearts, Rummy, Canasta, etc.) and enjoy an evening of playing and watching a movie together. To get lots of involvement, give a couple options for movie or card game and let the majority rule. Or if you get extra time...do a couple of them!

Libraries offer many free resources, unlimited access to books, movies, music and more! Don't forget to check down at the community centers to see if they have any free or reasonable priced events that are going on. Community volunteering is also a great way to bond for families! These are just a few ways to get involved, get creative and use your imagination to build on these ideas! Enjoy the warmer weather and the new life that is forming! Build memories that will last forever with your family, you won't regret it later on down the road!

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Sources Used: The Parental Rights Foundation



# Supporting Girls Through Middle School

For many girls, middle school becomes a pressure cooker filled with power struggles, conflicting impulses, physical growth and strong emotions. At the same time, middle-school girls develop deep and close friendships, separating from their families and forming their own rewarding social universes.



One of the best things you can do for your daughter is not to assume she or other girls are, by nature, over-dramatic, mean, or gossipy. Avoid 'girls will be girls' or 'girls are so mean to each other' messages. Appreciate and support your daughter's best impulses, praise her when she takes risks, especially if they involve going against the social tide.

- ✚ **Support her individuality**, and downplay concerns about what other people think. Encourage her to be friends with a wide spectrum of people (without forcing the issue), and always, assume the best of your daughter -- so will she.



- ✚ **Validate your daughter's feelings.** Parents can help their girls by talking on a regular basis, allowing time for sorting out problems but most importantly allowing feelings to be heard. This can take time and patience on a parent's part. Having a strong family support system, one where all feelings are valid and listened to can make a world of difference in helping girls 'hold it together' during the day at school.

- ✚ **Help her say "no."** Your daughter may have a great group of friends, but there may be times when she needs to say "no" — no to a party, no to drugs, and even no to sex. She needs you to model how to do this by giving her opportunities, from the time she is young, to take a stand and be heard by you. So acknowledge her "no's" to you, even if you don't agree with them.

- ✚ **Respect her decisions.** If your daughter faces a difficult social situation, start by simply empathizing, and then ask your daughter what she wants to do about it. It's OK to say, "Do you really think that's a good idea?" or "I don't know if I agree with that, but I'll respect what you decide to do." Unless your girl is going to do something unsafe, let her work it out on her own terms, and step in to help only if she needs you to, not because you want to.

- ✚ **Help her deal with gossip and rumors** — without spreading rumors yourself. Rumors, bullying and teasing are all too common but still very painful if it happens to your daughter. Don't jump in with both guns blaring and take over, call the other parent (unless you decide together to do that) or tell her what to do.

Keep in mind that part of this isn't about gossip — it's about transitions and the impact on friendships. So find out what your daughter wants to do and help her sort it out, before taking action on your own.

✚ **Help her stand up to cyber-bullying.** Spreading rumors on the Internet has become a new pastime for many girls. A recent Pew Internet Study reports that one-third of girls aged 12 to 14 have experienced online harassment, or "cyber-bullying" with e-mails and IMs passed between groups of girls. Parents - teach your daughters not to use the Internet to hash out personal conflicts, instead, guide your girls to sign off with a message like "gotta go" if they find themselves caught in the middle of nasty online emails or IM exchanges, and help girls understand why it's important not to forward online gossip.

✚ **Give girls roots and wings** - If we want our daughters to think for themselves; that means we have to give up some of our own influence. If we train them to always take orders from us, they will shift and take orders from the next authority that comes along, and that could be the girl culture, boys putting pressure on them, or even drugs. So we have to give girls strong roots when they are young and allow them to spread their wings as they grow up. This mean allowing them to express their anger at us, as this is a huge part of establishing independence, using their voices, and developing real self-confidence.



✚ **Strategies for Shopping with Your Girl** - Listen to why she wants the clothes, without criticism. Ask your daughter what she likes about an item of clothing. Let her explain her reasons (but be aware that her reasoning is not likely to be the same as yours) so that she feels her opinions are valued. **Discuss it without judging.** Instead of just saying "That's too short, not for you," talk about the image the clothing item projects, and ask your daughter questions that help her connect this image to more adult experiences she may not have thought about. You might explain why you think this clothing (or makeup) is inappropriate and ask her what she thinks. Helping her gain some perspective will be stronger than a simple "no," which may only make her want the item more.

✚ **Help her understand the power of words.** When you talk with your daughter about the clothes you approve of, use words and concepts like *'choice, freedom, and power'* to help her create a valid and true identity. Marketers use those words for a reason -- they know girls are creating identities through fashion.

# Empowering Teens to Contribute



Teens that take on responsibilities, have useful roles, and serve others are more likely to grow up with a sense of purpose and concern for others. They are also more likely to develop the skills and attitudes to take on new responsibilities. Here are some ideas to help you empower your teen to contribute.

- Reflect on how you do or don't encourage your teen to take responsibility and serve others. Are you sometimes so busy that you "just do it yourself" and don't give teens appropriate roles and responsibilities?
- Share family responsibilities. Have a family meeting to get everyone's ideas on accomplishing household tasks. Share the decisions then share the work.
- Ask your teen to teach you something new. It could be something being learned in school, something related to technology or sports, or a video game that your teen loves. (Then you can play it together.)
- Use home projects as learning projects. Whether you're planning a family reunion, doing home repair projects, or just catching up on chores, have your teen help and learn. (Knowing how to do laundry will be really helpful after leaving home!)
- Follow your teen's lead. Teens often are the ones who recognize problems and want to take action. If teens raise issues or concerns, encourage them to dig deeper, learn more, and suggest ways your family can respond.
- Take action together. Serving together as a family is a powerful way to demonstrate service to others. If there are specific social issues that matter to your family, set aside time regularly to help address the issues through a service project or another kind of social action. Reflect on your experiences afterward, noting how you've grown, what you've learned, and what you want to do next.
- Talk while serving. Some of the most productive time to talk with a teen is during those times when you are both focused on helping others. Working at a food bank, picking up trash, stuffing envelopes, or raking leaves are excellent opportunities to build relationships and talk.





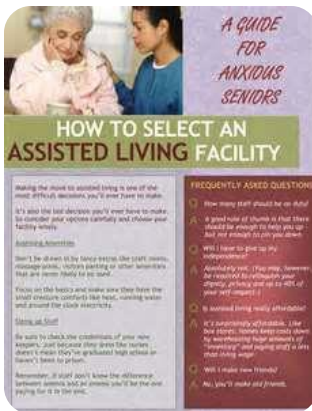
# Five Tips for Choosing an Assisted Living

When confronted with the question of senior care for a loved one, the many options available can be downright daunting. Understanding the basic differences between nursing homes and assisted living centers can ease the confusion and help you make the best decision.



If your loved one is determined to maintain their independence, and they have only minor issues of aging to contend with, an assisted living facility might be your best option. However, if your elderly loved one has significant medical problems that require regular monitoring, or mental or emotional issues that need constant attention, a skilled nursing facility could be a good fit. Choosing an assisted living center or a nursing home is not a decision to be taken lightly. Here are a few practical tips to help make the decision--and the transition--easier for everyone involved.

- ✓ **Start slow.** Begin with hiring help for basic chores, such as mowing the lawn or running errands. As the need for care progresses, add more in-home care.



- ✓ **Start a conversation.** Talk to your loved one about what the future might hold. Discuss their medical issues and what their options are for long-term care. Making a decision may not happen overnight, so be patient with them as they sort through their emotions.

- ✓ **Offer choices.** When staying at home is no longer realistic, sit down to talk about assisted living centers or nursing homes. Allow them to make many of the decisions on their own, within reason. Bring their doctor into the discussion and ask for their opinion as well.

- ✓ **Make legal preparations.** Long before a long-term care decision must be made; consider the legal roadblocks that might hinder any elder-care choices. Talk to your loved one about finances, durable power of attorney, conservatorship, and other legal factors.

- ✓ **Show them you care.** When you do place your senior loved one in an assisted living center or nursing home, visit them often and talk with them daily if at all possible. Pay attention to their care, follow up on any complaints, and become an advocate for them. Most of all, remind them how much you care about them, and show them that their comfort and health is your utmost concern.

# Five Benefits of Assisted Living Facilities



✚ **Safety.** Assisted living centers are set up to provide a safe, comfortable environment for elders. Many, though not all, have secure entrances. Nearly all are monitored enough so that elders aren't vulnerable to attack or burglary as they may be if they stay alone in their home. Just the fact that there are other people around makes communal living safer than being alone in a house. Also, most assisted living centers have alerting systems so if residents have emergencies in their own apartments or rooms, they can summon help.

✚ **Meals.** Appetites can diminish as we age, plus many people don't enjoy eating alone. Elders home alone often warm up something in the microwave or on the stove rather than preparing a nourishing meal. They then may eat in front of the TV for company. In assisted living, meals are provided and they often offer many choices of food. But the biggest plus may be that people have company for their meals.

✚ **Many centers offer kitchenettes,** so people have the option of preparing some meals in their apartments if they choose, which some do, especially breakfast. However, the pull of communal dining is pretty strong once they get used to company. When people have company for a meal, they generally eat better, so these communal meals can help keep a senior healthy. Also, many assisted living centers keep an eye on how well the elders eat to see if supplements seem to be necessary.

✚ **Transportation.** Most assisted living centers provide group transportation for shopping and to community events. Also, they can generally arrange transportation for seniors who need to get to clinic appointments. Each center is different, but the ability to go where they want is important to elders, and many seniors can no longer drive, or choose not to drive in heavy traffic. Assisted living centers can be a big help getting people where they want to go.



✚ **Less worry.** Even renters have to actively contact a landlord if there are plumbing or other problems in their apartment, and often they must follow up on repairs. For homeowners, it's worse. Seniors can be taken advantage of by unscrupulous contractors and repair people. They tend to be trusting and this makes them vulnerable. In assisted living, they don't have to worry about repair responsibilities. If something doesn't work properly, they or a loved one can alert the administration and the problem should be fixed. There's no worry about the senior letting in a stranger to fix their bathroom pipe or getting bilked on the bill.



**✚ Socialization.** Socialization is perhaps the most important reason why many people who insist that they will hate assisted living end up thriving. Many elders have slowly gotten so they don't want to go out of their home because it's too difficult to get where they want to go. Significant lifelong friends have health problems or have died.

Contributed by: Connie Greiner  
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## Sesame Tofu

Don't let tofu intimidate you. Try this easy and delicious meal.

Total time to prepare: 20 minutes

### Ingredients

14 oz. extra-firm tofu, drained  
¼ cup sesame seeds  
2 Tbs. canola oil  
3 cloves garlic, minced  
1 tsp. grated ginger

1 Tbs. balsamic vinegar  
2½ Tbs. lower-sodium soy sauce  
1 Tbs. brown sugar  
1 tsp. corn starch  
2 cups cooked brown rice  
6 heads sautéed baby bok choy

### Directions

- Cut the tofu into 12 three-quarter-inch-thick slabs. Blot well with a paper towel. Spread the sesame seeds on a plate and press the tofu into them.
- In a large non-stick pan, sauté the tofu in the oil until the sesame seeds are golden brown, about 3 minutes per side. Remove the tofu.
- In a small bowl, whisk together the garlic, ginger, vinegar, soy sauce, sugar, corn starch, and ½ cup of water. Add to the pan and simmer until thickened, about 2 minutes.
- Pour the sauce over the tofu. Serve with rice and bok choy. Serves 4.

### Nutrition Information:

Per Serving

Calories: 360	Saturated Fat: 2 g
Sodium: 460 mg	Carbohydrates: 37 g
Total Fat: 17 g	Protein: 17 g
	Fiber: 6 g

Resource: Author: Kate Sherwood in: Healthy Recipes  
NutritionAction.com



# Developing a Saving Mindset: 3 Steps to Teach Your Kids to Save

“Money is burning a hole in your pocket.” “A penny saved is a penny earned.” “Money doesn’t grow on trees”...or Mom and Dad. Though tired and cliché, we are all familiar with these phrases. Many of us have used them. My favorite, and my kids’ least favorite, is the last one. These phrases aptly express our desire to teach our children the value of saving money. So, why is it so hard to realize the meaning of these expressions? Why does it seem so hard to influence our kids’ spending habits? Saving is a mindset that comes with maturity and practice. It is a way of thinking about money that parents can teach to their children. Here are the three things you can do to teach a saving mindset and prevent the rolling eyes, sighs, puffs and that general glazed over look when you talk to your kids about money.



## ✓ **Start early to identify wants and needs.**



Kids are perfect little consumers; from the moment they are born they consume food, clothing, resources, and our love. We provide for their every need, no questions asked. However, somewhere along the way “need” becomes confused with “want”. Our kids have learned to use and extend the word “need” to their advantage: “Mommy, I ‘neeeeed’ that supersonic lightning speed thing-a-ma-jig” or “Dad, I ‘neeeeed’ that insanely overpriced gold gilded designer purse”. Adults footing the bill for these purchases know that neither the toy nor the purse are needs, but we want to make sure our kids understand this concept.

Next time your child approaches you with a “need” consider presenting her with the following questions: “Does it feed you, cloth you, house you, or transport you to a job? Okay, so it is not something you need. Are we going to buy it anyway?” Have a conversation with your child. It doesn’t mean you shouldn’t buy these things, but if you are teaching your child to have a saving mindset, wants and needs should be identified correctly so there is no confusion.

## ✓ **Practice money awareness.**

Children are very impulsive. Professional marketers are well aware of this trait when they place toys and high sugar cereals at toddler level and game controllers in the electronics aisle too low for dad to comfortably play with but just right for junior. Marketers depend on kids’ abilities to talk parents and grandparents into a purchase based on impulse. Giving a child an allowance can short circuit that strategy. Allowances help teach a saving mindset by developing a money awareness in children. Kids learn the money stream has an end and that it really doesn’t “grow on trees”.



Consider this conversation: Johnny: “Mom, I want that cool new hyper electronic sports game.” Mom: “Do you have the money to pay for it?” Johnny: “Yes”. Mom: “Well, then, it is your decision”. At this point your child may pause...mine does. The thought of depleting allowance funds always hits kids a bit hard. Children are much less impulsive with their own money. What Johnny wanted to hear was “Okay, dear, I’ll buy that for you.” He didn’t expect to have to make the decision himself.

So, there are a few ground rules for parents in regard to allowances. One, don’t bail your child out. If your child runs out of money and something else comes up, let him wait until he has enough money. Two, don’t loan your child money unless you are going to charge interest. This is the real world after all. Three, don’t give your child an allowance and constantly pay for everything anyway. That doesn’t mean you won’t buy anything for your children, but anything you pay for is a gift and gifts don’t happen every day.

✓ **Incentivize saving with matching funds.**

Once your child has identified “wants” and has practiced making decisions to manage her supply of money, you are more than half way to teaching a saving mindset. Now, your child has to learn to actually save money and put it away untouched for a period of time. Parents can encourage saving habits by offering incentives or rewards. We all like to be rewarded for our good behavior so offer something to your child for saving well. One possibility is matching funds. When kids are thinking about saving for something costly, they sometimes get discouraged because it can take so long to get there. If you match your child’s saving efforts she can reach her goal a little faster. For example: Parent: “For every \$5 you save I will give you an additional \$5.” Or: “For every \$10 you save I will give you \$5.” You can match as little or as much as you like. The point is to reward the behavior you want to see. There are some ground rules here as well.



One, don’t match everything! Some things are reachable within a typical allowance. Two, make sure you require your child to stretch and struggle a little...just not enough to become discouraged. Another option is to supplement the allowance with money you would spend anyway. For example, my daughter’s school held book fairs every year. My spouse and I decided it was something we would pay for and it would be outside my daughter’s allowance. We wanted to encourage her to save and avoid buying books on impulse so we gave her a set amount of money and informed her she could keep whatever she did not spend at the book fair. She was also allowed to use her allowance at the book fair if she chose to do so. After the book fair, we noticed something miraculous had happened.

My daughter took longer to buy her books, she didn't come home with books she didn't read (impulse buys often wind up at the bottom of the toy box virtually untouched), and she only spent half of the money we gave her. She came home talking about the prices of everything and she did not spend any of her allowance money. She had become a pint sized penny pincher! So, whether you decide to match savings or use supplemental funds to provide rewards, using saving incentives will pay off.

Tired and cliché phrases like “a penny saved is a penny earned” may still invite rolling eyes, sighs and puffs; but there will be understanding behind those gestures because the concept has been lived and practiced. Identifying wants, controlling impulses by practicing money awareness and learning to save encourage the saving mindset we so desperately want to teach our children. With patience, encouragement, and persistence, we can teach our children to make good money decisions and develop financial skills which will last a lifetime.

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## Banana-Pear Caterpillar Recipe

Prep/Total Time: 15 min.

Yield: 1 Serving

### Ingredients

1 lettuce leaf  
1 medium banana, peeled  
1/2 medium red pear, cut into 1/4-inch slices  
2 raisins



### Directions

Place lettuce on a salad plate; top with the banana. Cut 1/4-in. V-shaped slices halfway through the banana, spacing cuts 1 in. apart. Place a pear slice, peel side up, in each cut. For eyes, gently press raisins into one end of banana. Serve immediately. Yield: 1 serving.

### Nutritional Facts

1 serving (1 each) equals 160 calories, 1 g fat (trace saturated fat), 0 cholesterol, 2 mg sodium, 41 g carbohydrate, 5 g fiber, 2 g protein.

Source: Quick Cooking July/August 2000, p40 (tasteofhome.com)