

Eating for HEALTH and FUN



FACTS ABOUT FEEDING CHILDREN AGE 1 TO 5

BUILDING BLOCKS FOR GROWING UP HEALTHY

Children's appetites slow down after their first birthday. This is because growth and appetite change during the preschool years. Parents often worry because children may not seem as hungry as before. However, this period of changing appetite will not last long. Around age 6, appetites improve.



FUN WITH FOOD

- Serve meals that look good, taste good and have bright colors. Use a variety of shapes and textures; different flavors and temperatures.
- Let your child help prepare meals and snacks. Examples: spread peanut butter on bread or celery; pour liquids; peel fruits and vegetables; cut-up fruits and vegetables; mix and stir food; wrap and pack a snack for the park. Children will eat food they have fixed themselves.
- Help your child learn new words and develop the five senses. Talk about how foods LOOK (shapes, colors), FEEL (smooth, soft, hard, rough), SMELL (minty, fruity), TASTE (sweet, bitter, salty), SOUND (crunch, snap, squish).



HAPPY MEALTIMES

- Set regular meal and snack times. Children need to eat more frequently than adults.
- Serve nutritious snacks between regular meal times. Hungry children become fussy. When giving snacks, serve them at least 2 hours before meals.
- Make meals a family time. Children like to eat with others.
- Have a casual, easy attitude about what, how much, and the way your child eats.
- Expect spills. Have a towel handy and avoid making a fuss. Young children are often messy eaters.
- Set a good example by eating a variety of foods. Children learn by watching others.



TROUBLE-FREE EATING

- Praise your child for good eating practices. Avoid being critical of poor eating practices.
- Don't force your child to eat. Encourage a tasting bite and if rejected, wait and try at another time.
- Refusing to eat is one way of getting attention. Stay calm. Making a scene only encourages this behavior.
- Don't argue with children who refuse to eat. They may be tired, excited, or not hungry. Wait until the next *regular* meal or snack time to offer food. Children will eat when they get hungry.
- Avoid using food to bribe, reward or punish. A child may begin using food to fill emotional needs. This may lead to overeating and overweight.
- Don't serve dessert as a reward for a clean plate.



EATING MADE EASY

- Sit your child so that the elbows can rest on the table and the back is supported. A steady sitting position helps children eat more.
- Give your child a small, short spoon and fork with short, blunt tines. Use plastic glasses and dishes with sides.
- Serve bite-size pieces and small portions. Let your child ask for more. Too much food at once is discouraging. Serve some food that can be eaten with fingers.
- Introduce a new food when your child feels well and is hungry. Serve a new food along side a favorite food.
- Serve only one new food at a meal. Serve the new food by itself rather than in mixed dishes.
- Give your child some food choices so that they can develop independence.



PHYSICAL ACTIVITY AND EXERCISE



- Physical activity is needed for a healthy child. Play and exercise stimulate an appetite. However, exhausting exercise causes children to eat poorly.
- Plan a quiet time before meals. Listening to music, reading a story or quiet play helps children to settle down before eating.
- During physical activity, children lose water by sweating. Replace this by giving your child water to drink.

SUGGESTED DAILY EATING GUIDE FOR PRESCHOOL CHILDREN

The table presents general advice for a healthy diet. It shows how much food children need for growth and development.

ESSENTIAL FOOD GROUPS	Recommended Daily Intake ^(a)	Typical Portion Size ^(b)	
		1 to 3 Years	4 to 5 Years
<p><u>Vegetable-Fruit Group</u></p> <p>Foods in this group are: raw, cooked/canned, frozen or juice.</p> <p>Include daily:</p> <p>Vitamin C source^(c) such as citrus, strawberries, broccoli.</p> <p>Vitamin A source such as dark green or deep yellow vegetables.</p> <p>Folacin-rich source such as asparagus, broccoli, peas, spinach.</p> <p>Iron source such as peas, green beans, "greens", raisins, prunes.</p>	2 1/2 cups	1/3 to 1/2 cup	1/2 cup
<p><u>Bread-Cereal Group</u></p> <p>Food items equivalent to 1 slice bread are:</p> <p>1 ounce cereal</p> <p>1/2 to 3/4 c. macaroni, noodles, rice or spaghetti</p> <p>Include daily:</p> <p>Iron-fortified cereal at 25% or more of U.S. RDA for iron.</p> <p>Combination of whole grain and enriched or fortified bread or cereal products.</p>	1 serving cereal and 4 slices bread or equivalent	1/2 ounce 1/2 slice	1 ounce 1/2 slice
<p><u>Milk-Cheese Group^(d)</u></p> <p>Some portions of dairy foods and their equivalents in calcium are:</p> <p>1 oz. aged cheese = 3/4 c. milk (6 fl. oz.)</p> <p>1 in. cheese cube = 1/2 c. milk (4 fl. oz.)</p> <p>1/2 oz. processed cheese food = 1/4 c. milk (2 fl. oz.)</p> <p>1/2 c. cottage cheese = 1/4 c. milk (2 fl. oz.)</p> <p>1/4 c. plain yogurt = 1/4 c. milk (2 fl. oz.)</p>	2 1/2 cups (20 fluid ounces milk or equivalent)	1/2 cup (4 fl. oz.)	3/4 cup (6 fl. oz.)
<p><u>Meat-Poultry-Fish-Beans Group</u></p> <p>Protein equivalents for 1 ounce of meat, poultry, or fish are:</p> <p>1 large egg</p> <p>2 tbsp. peanut butter</p> <p>1/2 to 3/4 c. cooked dry beans or lentils</p> <p>1/4 to 1/2 c. nuts or seeds</p> <p>3 tbsp. junior meats</p>	3 to 4 ounces or equivalent (1 oz. is about 2 tbsp. or 1/4 cup cooked lean meat, poultry, fish)	1 to 1 1/2 ounces	2 ounces
NON-ESSENTIAL FOOD GROUP			
<p>Examples of food items in this group are:</p> <p>Margarine, butter, vegetable oil, salad dressing, bacon, cake, pie, donut, candy, sugar, honey, syrup, pop, fruit-flavored drinks.</p>	<p>These foods mainly provide calories. Add them if more calories are needed. Limit these foods if fewer calories are required.</p>		

Sometimes food selections are low in folacin, iron, vitamin B₆, zinc and magnesium. Choose foods that are either natural sources or fortified with these nutrients. Check food composition tables or product nutrition labels.

(a) Recommended Daily Intake needs to be divided and spaced throughout the day in meals and snacks.

(b) Portion size reflects the amount of food the average child can eat easily based on average stomach capacity. The total number of portions consumed should add up to the "Recommended Daily Intake".

(c) Vitamin C source needs to contain at least 30 mg per 1/2 cup.

(d) Except for vitamin D fortified milk, dietary sources of vitamin D for preschool children are likely to be low. Exposure to sunlight and servings of vitamin D-fortified food are recommended (check product nutrition labels). Supplements are not needed.

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