

Preschool Period Nutrition

Your child's diet should now resemble that of the rest of the families, with 3 meals and 2 nutritious snacks each day.. While children's food intake from meal to meal may appear to be erratic, total daily energy intake remains fairly constant.

Children show the ability to respond to the energy contents of foods by adjusting their appetites to reflect the energy density of the diet.

In contrast to their skills in regulation of food intake, young children do not appear to have the innate ability to choose a well-balanced diet. Rather, they depend on adults to offer them a variety of nutritious and developmentally appropriate foods and to model the consumption of those foods.

You should now be giving your child homogenized whole cow's milk. You can, also, begin to use 2%, low fat, or skim milk instead. You should limit milk and dairy products to about 16oz each day and 100% fruit juice to about 4-6 oz each day and offer a variety of foods to encourage good eating habits later.

Feeding practices to avoid are continuing to use a bottle, giving large amounts of sweet desserts, soft drinks, fruit-flavored drinks, sugarcoated cereals, chips or candy, as they have little nutritional value. Also avoid giving foods that your child can choke on, such as raw carrots, peanuts, whole grapes, tough meats, popcorn, chewing gum or hard candy.

Your child's nutrition is important to her overall health. Proper nutrition can also prevent many medical problems, including becoming overweight, developing weak bones, and developing diabetes. It will also ensure that your child physically grows to her full potential.

The best nutrition advice to keep your child healthy is by encouraging them to:

- Eat a variety of foods
- Balance the food you eat with physical activity
- Choose a diet with plenty of grain products, vegetables and fruits
- Choose a diet low in fat, saturated fat, and cholesterol
- Choose a diet moderate in sugars and salt
- Choose a diet that provides enough calcium and iron to meet their growing body's requirements.

You can also help promote good nutrition by setting a good example. Healthy eating habits and regular exercise should be a regular part of your family's life. It is much easier if everyone in the house follows these guidelines, than if your child has to do it alone. You should also buy low-calorie and low-fat meals, snacks and desserts, low fat or skim milk and diet drinks. Avoid buying high calorie desserts or snacks, such as snack chips, regular soft drinks or regular ice cream.

The Food Guide Pyramid for young children was designed by the US Dept. of Agriculture to promote healthy nutrition in children over two years of age. It is meant to be a general guide to daily food choices. The main emphasis of the food pyramid is on the five major food groups, all of which are required for good health. It also emphasizes that foods that include a lot of fats, oils and sweets should be used very sparingly.

To ensure good nutrition in your child and that they grow up healthy, they will need to eat a large variety of foods. The amount of foods that they eat is much less important. Remember that your child's appetite may decrease and become pickier over the next few years as his growth rate slows. As long as they are gaining weight and have a normal activity level, then you have little to worry about. You can still offer them a variety of foods, but can decrease the serving sizes if they don't eat a lot.

What counts as one serving?

Grain group servings include 1 slice of bread, 1/2 cup of cooked rice or pasta, 1/2 cup of cooked cereal, and 1 ounce of ready to eat cereal. Your child should eat 6 servings from this group.

Vegetable group servings include 1/2 cup of chopped or raw vegetables, or 1 cup of raw leafy vegetables. Your child should eat 3 servings from this group.

Fruit group servings include 1 piece of fruit or melon wedge, 3/4 cup of 100% fruit juice, 1/2 cup of canned fruit, or 1/4 cup of dried fruit. Your child should eat 2 servings from this group.

Milk group servings include 1 cup of milk or yogurt or 2 ounces of cheese. Your child should eat 2 servings from this group.

Meat group servings include 2 to 3 ounces of cooked lean meat, poultry or fish, 1/2 cup of cooked dry beans. You can substitute 2 tablespoons of peanut butter or 1 egg for 1 ounce of meat. Your child should eat 2 servings from this group.

Fats, Oils and Sweets

No more than 30% of your diet should come from fats. For a 1600 calorie diet, that would equal 53g of fat each day, with most preschool children requiring even less. The type of fat that you eat is also important.

Saturated fats in foods such as meats, dairy products, coconut, palm and palm kernel oil, raise cholesterol more than **unsaturated fats**, which are found in olive, peanut, and canola oils, or **polyunsaturated fats** in safflower, sunflower, corn, soybean and cottonseed oils. Limit saturated fats to no more than 10% of daily calories.

Sugars supply a large amount of calories, with little nutritional value. They include white sugar, brown sugar, corn syrup, honey and molasses and foods like candy, soft drinks, jams, and jellies.

Selection tips:

- use lean meats and skim or low fat dairy products
- use unsaturated vegetable oils and margarines that list a liquid vegetable oil as the first ingredient on the label
- read the nutrition label on foods to check for the amount and type of fat it includes
- limit foods that contain a large amount of saturated fats

limit foods high in sugar and avoid adding extra sugar to your foods

Prevention of Feeding Problems

The best way to prevent feeding problems is to teach your child to feed himself as early as possible, provide them with healthy choices and allow experimentation. Mealtimes should be enjoyable and pleasant and not a source of struggle. Common mistakes are allowing your child to drink too much milk or juice so that they aren't hungry for solids, forcing your child to eat when they aren't hungry, or forcing them to eat foods that they don't want. Also, avoid giving large amounts of sweet desserts, soft drinks, fruit-flavored drinks, sugarcoated cereals, chips or candy, as they have little nutritional value.

Your child may now start to refuse to eat some foods, become a very picky eater or even go on binges where they will only want to eat a certain food. An important way that children learn to be independent is through establishing independence about feeding. Even though your child may not be eating as well rounded a diet as you would like, as long as your child is growing normally and has a normal energy level,

there is probably little to worry about. Remember that this is a period in his development where he is not growing very fast and doesn't need a lot of calories. Also, most children do not eat a balanced diet each and every day, but over the course of a week or so their diet will usually be well balanced. You can consider giving your child a daily vitamin if you think he is not eating well, although he probably doesn't need it.

While you should provide three well-balanced meals each day, it is important to keep in mind that most children will only eat one or two full meals each day. If your child has had a good breakfast and lunch, then it is okay that he doesn't want to eat much at dinner. Although your child will probably be hesitant to try new foods, you should still offer small amounts of them once or twice a week (one tablespoon of green beans, for example). Most children will try a new food after being offered it 10-15 times.

Other ways to prevent feeding problems are to not use food as a bribe or reward for desired behaviors, avoid punishing your child for not eating well, limit mealtime conversation to positive and pleasant topics, avoid discussing or commenting on your child's poor eating habits while at the table, limit eating and drinking to the table or high chair, and limit snacks to two nutritious snacks each day. You should also not prepare more than one meal for your child. If he doesn't want to eat what was prepared for the rest of the family, then he should not be forced to, but you should also not give him something else to eat. He will not starve after missing a single meal, and providing alternatives to the prepared meal will just cause more problems later.

Calcium Requirements

Calcium is a mineral that is mostly present in your child's bones. Having a diet with foods that are high in calcium to meet daily requirements is necessary for the development of strong bones. It is also an important way to prevent the development of osteoporosis in adults.

Preschool age children require about 500 to 800 mg of calcium each day. See the table below for the calcium content of common foods and check the nutrition label to choose foods high in calcium when you prepare your families diet. Also choose foods that are fortified with calcium.

examples:		
Food	Servings	Calcium Content
Milk, whole or low fat	1 cup	300 mg
White beans	1/2 cup	113 mg
Broccoli, cooked	1/2 cup	35 mg
Broccoli, raw	1 cup	35 mg
Cheddar cheese	1.5 oz	300 mg
Yogurt, low fat	8 oz	300 mg
Orange juice, calcium fortified	1 cup	300 mg
Orange, medium	1	40-50 mg
Sweet potatoes, mashed	1/2 cup	44 mg

Iron Requirements

Iron is another mineral that is important for your child's growth. Having a diet with foods that are high in iron to meet daily requirements is necessary for the development of strong muscles and production of blood.

Preschool age children require about 10 mg of iron each day. See the table below for the iron content of common foods and check the nutrition label to choose foods high in iron when you prepare your families diet. Also choose foods that are fortified with iron (cereals, bread, rice, and pasta).

Meat	Serving size	Iron (mg)
Chicken liver, cooked	3½ ounces	12.8
Oysters, breaded and fried	6 pieces	4.5
Beef, chuck, lean only, braised	3 ounces	3.2
Clams, breaded, fried	¾ cup	3.0
Beef, tenderloin, roasted	3 ounces	3.0
Turkey, dark meat, roasted	3½ ounces	2.3
Beef, eye of round, roasted	3 ounces	2.2
Turkey, light meat, roasted	3½ ounces	1.6
Chicken, leg, meat only, roasted	3½ ounces	1.3
Tuna, fresh blue fin, cooked, dry heat	3 ounces	1.1
Chicken, breast, roasted	3 ounces	1.1
Halibut, cooked, dry heat	3 ounces	0.9
Crab, blue crab, cooked, moist heat	3 ounces	0.8
Pork, loin, broiled	3 ounces	0.8
Tuna, white, canned in water	3 ounces	0.8
Shrimp, mixed species, cooked, moist heat	4 large	0.7
Veggies and fruits	Serving Size	Iron (mg)
Sea Vegetables	½ cup	18-42
Swiss chard	½ cup	2
Turnip greens	½ cup	1.6
Spinach, cooked	½ cup	1.5
Beet greens, cooked	½ cup	1.4
Potato	½ cup	1.4

Bok Choy	½ cup	.7
Peas	½ cup	.65
Green Beans	½ cup	.6
Tomato Juice	½ cup	.6
Dried Figs	5	2.0
Dried Apricots	5	1.6
Broccoli	½ cup	.55
Prune Juice	4 oz	1.5
Water Melon	1/8 of melon	.5
Soy Products	Serving Size	Iron (mg)
Tofu	½ cup	6.6
Soy Beans	½ cup	4.4
Tempeh	½ cup	1.8
Soy Milk	½ cup	.9
Nuts, Seeds and Legumes	Serving Size	Iron (mg)
Sun Flower Seeds	2 TBLS	1.2
Lentils	½ cup	3.2
Pinto Beans	½ sup	2.2
Black eyed beans	½ sup	2.6
Navy Beans	½ sup	2.5
Chick Peas	200 g	6.2
Pumpkin Seeds	2 TBLS	2.5
Almonds	¼ cup	1.3

School-age Nutrition

During the school years, increases in memory and logic abilities are accompanied by reading, writing, math skills and knowledge. This is the period in which basic good nutritional concepts can be introduced to children.

EAT BREAKFAST! Breakfast helps children's concentration. Many studies have shown higher test scores and retention of material among children that have eaten a healthy breakfast.

EAT SMALL NUTRITIOUS SNACKS! In between meals children should have GOOD snacks. The great taste of fruits and vegetables and their convenience should be emphasized. Keep fresh fruit and vegetables prepared and readily available for snacks. Snacks will help children to stay satisfied, so that they never sit down to a meal feeling starved.

Parents should set a good example and follow the guidelines that they are trying to instill in their children.

Children should be encouraged to:

- Eat plenty of vegetables, legumes, and fruits
- Eat plenty of cereals (including breads, rice, pasta and noodles), preferably wholegrain
- Include lean meat, fish, poultry and/or alternatives
- Include milks, yogurts, cheese and/or alternatives

Note: Reduced-fat milks are not suitable for young children under 2 years, because of their high energy needs, but reduced-fat varieties should be encouraged for older children.

- Choose water as a drink

and care should be taken to:

- Limit saturated fat and moderate total fat intake

Note: Low-fat diets are not suitable for infants

- Choose foods low in salt
- Consume only moderate amounts of sugars and foods containing added sugars
- Limit trans fats

Help your child have a healthy body image. Focus on the positives of their appearance and their special gifts. Encourage exercise and activity. Television, video games, and computer time should be limited, so that your children can engage in activities that keep their growing bodies fit.