

Right from the Start

ABC's of Good Nutrition for Young Children



Good Nutrition: The Results Are Worth It

Proper nutrition begins at the supermarket with the foods you buy and continues at home as you prepare and serve meals. Giving your child a healthy start with good eating habits promotes his or her lifelong health.

This brochure focuses on feeding young children. It is meant to help you set the stage for healthful eating habits and food choices. The ABCs of good family nutrition start with love and common sense.

For specific advice about food and nutrition for young children, talk to your child's pediatrician or a registered dietitian.

Active Play Is Important to Health

Along with proper nutrition, your child needs physical activity for lifelong health. In the form of active play, physical activity not only promotes your child's appetite. It also helps develop a sense of well-being and confidence in his or her physical activities. From the early childhood years, encourage your child to live an active life.

Actions Speak Louder Than Words

As children grow and develop, they watch for clues about food choices. Youngsters often copy food habits, likes and dislikes. When you make wise food choices, your actions speak louder than words.

The ABCs of Good Nutrition

A variety of foods provides the nutrients that young children need to build strong bodies and stay healthy. Food also supplies the energy that children need to grow normally, play, learn and explore the world around them.

Offering a variety of tasty foods is the best way to supply the nutrition that a growing child needs.

A wide variety of foods are part of the five different food groups. Each food group makes special nutrient contributions. And each nutrient has certain jobs in the body.

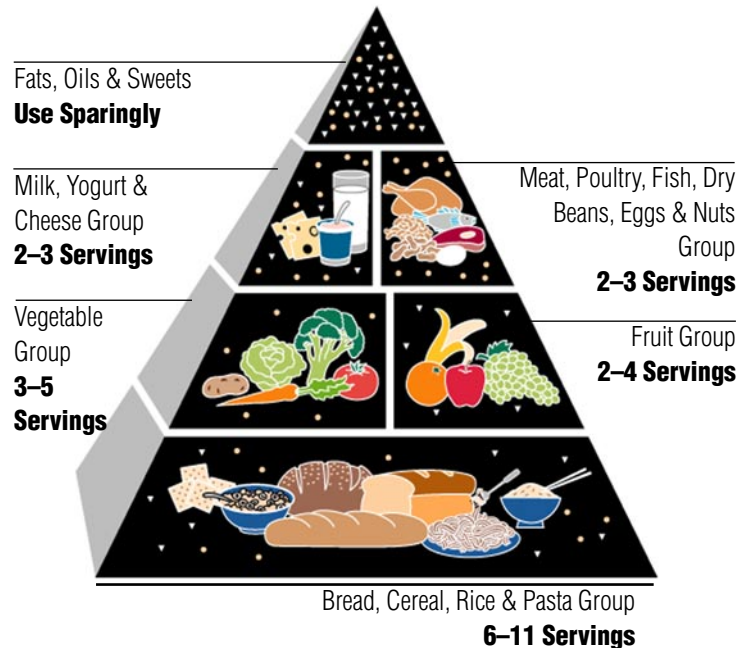
Foods from all the groups work together to supply energy and nutrients necessary for health and growth. No one food group is more important than another. For good health, you and your child need them all.

Eating Right: The Pyramid Way

The Food Guide Pyramid is a practical eating guide that emphasizes food from five major food groups. It's flexible and realistic. And it's meant for all healthy people, ages two and over.

By following the advice of the Pyramid, children get the nutrients and energy from food that they need for growth and good health.

The Food Guide Pyramid shows the variety of foods within each food group and the number of servings that are right for your child. Most children—over two years—need the *minimum number of servings from each food group*.



Some Pyramid Foods to Choose

- *From the Bread, Cereal, Rice and Pasta Group:* a whole-grain bread, crackers, cereal, grits, pasta, rice, bagel, tortilla, cornbread, pita bread, muffin, English muffin, matzo crackers, rice cake, pancakes, breadsticks, pretzels
- *From the Vegetable Group:* asparagus, beets, bok choy, broccoli, carrots, cauliflower, collard greens, corn, cucumber, green and red peppers, green beans, jicama, kale, okra, peas, potato, pumpkin, snow peas, squash, spinach, sweet potato, tomato, vegetable juices, zucchini
- *From the Fruit Group:* apple, applesauce, apricot, banana, berries, cantaloupe, fruit cocktail, figs, fruit juices, grapefruit, kiwifruit, mango, nectarine, orange, papaya, peach, pear, plum, pineapple, raisins*, prunes, starfruit, strawberries, tangerine, watermelon
- *From the Milk, Yogurt and Cheese Group:* skim, 1%, 2% and whole** milk, yogurt, cheese, string cheese, cottage cheese, pudding, custard, frozen yogurt, ice milk, calcium-fortified soybean milk
- *From the Meat, Poultry, Fish, Dry Beans, Eggs and Nuts* Group:* lean cuts of beef, veal, pork, ham and lamb; skinless chicken and turkey; fish; shellfish; cooked beans (kidney beans, black-eyed peas, pinto beans, lentils, black beans); refried beans (made without lard); peanut butter; eggs; reduced-fat deli meats; tofu; nuts*; peanuts*

* Raisins, nuts, peanuts and seeds are not recommended for children under four years of age because they are a choking hazard. Small pieces of hard, uncooked fruits and vegetables also pose a choking hazard to children under age four.

** Children under two years of age should *only* drink whole milk.

How Do I Know If My Child Is Eating Enough?

Children eat when they are hungry and usually stop when they are full. Some parents worry because young children appear to eat very small amounts of food, especially when compared to adult portions. A child who is growing well is getting enough to eat.

To check your child's eating pattern, pay attention to his or her food choices.

- Make sure no one food group is completely left out. If this happens for a few days, don't worry. But prolonged neglect of a food group could keep your child from getting enough nutrients.
- Encourage your child to be adventurous and eat a variety of foods within the food groups, too. Even within a food group, different foods provide different nutrients.

Child-Size Servings: Be Realistic

For youngsters, adult-size servings can be overwhelming. Offering child-size servings encourages food acceptance.

Here's an easy guide to child-size servings:

- Serve one-fourth to one-third of the adult portion size, or one measuring tablespoon for each year of the young child's age.
- Give less than you think the child will eat. Let the child ask for more if he or she is still hungry.

Snacks Count, Too

Snacks make up an important part of childhood nutrition. Children must eat frequently. With their small stomachs, they cannot eat enough at meals alone for their high energy needs. Three meals and two or three healthful snacks a day help youngsters meet their daily nutrition needs.

To make the most of snacks, parents and caregivers should control the type of snack and time it is served.

Type. Offer a variety of food-group snacks. Choose mostly snack foods that supply enough nutrients to justify their energy, or calories. Picking snack foods from the five food groups of the Food Guide Pyramid is the best way to do this.

Timing. Plan snacks. Schedule snacks around normal daily events, and space them at least two hours before meals. Children should learn to get and feel hungry, instead of feeling full all the time.

Quick and Smart Snack Food Ideas

For more nutrition, mix and match snacks from more than one food group:

- Fresh, frozen or canned fruit (banana, strawberries, cantaloupe pieces, orange sections, apple slices) or fruit juice
- Raw vegetables (baby carrots, cucumber slices, zucchini sticks, broccoli florets*)
- Vegetable soup
- Graham, animal crackers or fig bars
- Soft pretzels or breadsticks
- English muffin or bagel
- Low-fat yogurt or string cheese
- Skim or 1% milk ** (flavored or unflavored)
- Turkey or meat cubes
- Hard-cooked egg

This brochure was developed as part of the **HEALTHY START...Food to Grow On** program, an information and education campaign that promotes healthful food choices and eating habits for healthy children ages two years and over. The **HEALTHY START** program was produced as a cooperative effort by the American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP), The American Dietetic Association (ADA), and the Food Marketing Institute (FMI).

For a referral to a registered dietitian and food and nutrition information, call the ADA's National Center for Nutrition and Dietetics Consumer Nutrition Hot Line at (800) 366-1655. For answers to your food and nutrition questions from a registered dietitian, please dial (900) CALL-AN-RD or (900) 225-5267.

From your doctor

