

Healthy Eating for your Preschooler

Healthy Eating
Made Easier®



Food Group	Everyday Your Child Needs:			Help With Servings
	2-year-olds	3-year-olds	4- to 5-year-olds	
Dairy Milk, Yogurt, Cheese	2 cups	2 cups	2.5 cups	1 cup milk or yogurt, 1.5 ounces natural cheese, 2 ounces processed cheese
Vegetables	1 cup	1-1.5 cups	1.5-2 cups	1 cup raw (see safe feeding tips below), canned or cooked
Fruits	1 cup	1-1.5 cups	1-1.5 cups	1 cup raw or canned (see safe feeding tips below), 1 cup juice, ½ cup dried, 1 banana
Grains Breads, Cereals, Pasta	3 ounces	3-5 ounces	4-5 ounces	One ounce = 1 slice bread, ½ bagel, ½ cup cooked cereal, pasta or rice, 1 cup dry cereal
Protein Meat, Beans, Nuts	2 ounces	2-4 ounces	3-5 ounces	One ounce = 1 ounce meat, poultry or fish, 1 egg, ¼ cup cooked beans, 1 tablespoon peanut butter

To minimize the risk of choking, follow these safe feeding tips for children less than 4 years of age:

- ✱ Make sure your toddler eats only while seated and supervised by an adult.
- ✱ Discourage talking, laughing or playing while a child has food or beverage in their mouth.
- ✱ Avoid raw fruits and vegetables that snap into hard chunks, such as carrot and celery sticks and firm apples.
- ✱ Choose snacks for the car carefully.
- ✱ Never offer peanuts, grapes, carrots, whole or large sections of hot dogs, meat sticks, popcorn or hard candies to young children—hot dogs and carrots in particular should be quartered lengthwise and then sliced into small pieces.
- ✱ Peel and slice grapes lengthwise. Whole grapes can cause choking.

General toddler feeding tips:

- ✱ Use unbreakable dishes.
- ✱ Use a plate or bowl with raised sides.
- ✱ Give a child-size spoon and a small fork with dull prongs.
- ✱ Serve foods that are mashed or cut into small pieces.
- ✱ Try finger foods like cheese slices or thinly sliced apple “moons.”



Tips for Feeding and Preparing Food With Your Preschooler

Eating Patterns and Behaviors

A toddler wants to be independent and will want to feed himself or herself, although sometimes will look for your help.

Your child needs to learn to feed himself or herself and needs to feel successful. They need to make a mess!

Helping in the Kitchen

Allow children to help prepare the meal. It takes longer but encourages interest in the food.

Make sure your toddler has a safe place to stand and work at the counter.

2-year-olds



- Growth slows and appetite drops
- Learns to bring food to mouth with spoon
- Learns to drink from cup
- Likes to feed self but needs help
- Copies others and will eat many family foods
- Develops likes/dislikes; has very clear ideas about eating and not eating
- Likes sweet foods
- Likes to touch and play with food; responds to food texture
- Distracted easily
- Play with pots, plastic containers and wooden spoons on floor
- Hand grocery items to adult to put away
- Imitate cooking preparation with plastic bowls and toddler spoons
- Spin salad
- Rinse vegetables
- Wipe cans before opening

3-year-olds



- Improved muscle control; uses spoon and fork easily
- Will eat raw veggies but may refuse salad
- Can make simple either/or food choices
- Requests desserts and sweets



- Rinse vegetables
- Scrub potatoes
- Name and count foods
- Talk about cooking
- Shape meatballs
- Tear lettuce
- Scoop and mash ingredients



4- to 5-year-olds



- Returns to food jags or may go on food "strikes"
- Influenced by others: TV, teachers, other children
- Dislikes most mixed food dishes and gravies
- Has increasing appetite
- Has fewer demands by age 5, and often will accept food available

- Count items
- Snap peas
- Peel bananas
- Shuck corn
- Break eggs into bowl (wash hands afterward!)
- Pour juice and milk*
- Help measure ingredients
- Mix ingredients
- Pour cereal
- Open packages*
- Make sandwiches*
- Toss salads*

* With help of an adult

