

Feeding Young Children Ages 2-5

Good eating habits help promote good health and happiness for your child.

Lifetime eating habits are usually formed in early childhood.

You can help your child develop good habits by making mealtime pleasant and relaxed.

It can be a time to enjoy being with other family members and to learn about food.

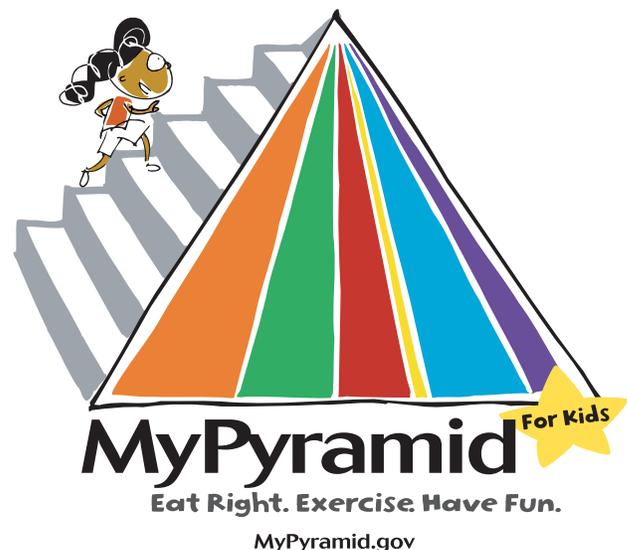
Help your child learn good eating habits that will last a lifetime:

- Start each day with a good breakfast.
- Eat three meals a day.
- Eat a variety of foods.
- Eat nutritious snacks between meals as needed.
- Enjoy eating together as a family.
- Try to make mealtimes pleasant and relaxed.
- Help plan and prepare meals.
- Drink milk with meals.
- Eat lots of vegetables and fruits.
- Chew food well.
- Eat until full, then stop eating.

Nutrition experts say it's the parents' job to give children healthful foods and provide a pleasant, calm place for them to eat. Then, they need to relax and let kids make choices about what and how much to eat.

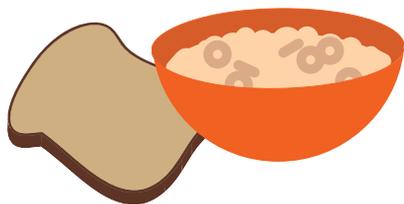
Studies show preschool children can make healthful food choices and that they need to be allowed to follow their internal signals by eating when they're hungry. They may eat like a bird one day and like a horse the next. Give children plenty of nutritious food choices, and they will eat a variety of foods over time.

Let MyPyramid guide you in selecting nutritious foods for your child.



Grains

Choose whole-grain breads and cereals. Read labels, and make sure the first ingredient says "whole."



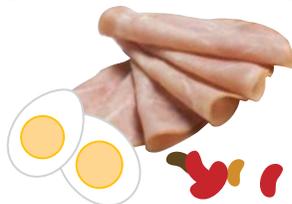
Vegetables

Color your plate with great-tasting veggies. Go dark green with broccoli and spinach; go orange with carrots and sweet potatoes.



Meat & Beans

Eat lean or low-fat meat, chicken, turkey and fish. Ask for it baked, grilled or broiled – not fried. Nuts, seeds, peas and beans are protein-rich.



Tips to help your picky eater:

- Provide healthy foods at regular meals and snack times.
- Allow your child time to eat.
- Offer meals at regular times so your child will be ready to eat.
- Offer small portions of foods. If more is wanted, serve second helpings.
- Don't pressure, threaten or beg your child to eat or to clean his plate.
- Set limits on candy, chips and sweet drinks.
- Serve very small amounts of new foods along with a favorite food.

Reward children for good behavior by reading a book or playing a game together—not with food!

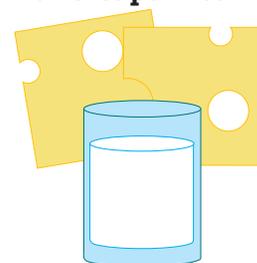
Fruits

Enjoy fruits – nature's sweet and delicious treat!
Go easy on juice – make it 100% juice!



Milk

Drink milk for calcium to build strong bones and teeth. Choose fat-free or low-fat milk, yogurt and cheese. Young children need 2 cups milk each day. Active 4 and 5 year olds may need 3 cups daily. You may divide the 2 or 3 cups into smaller amounts and serve at meals and snacks.



- Choose nutrient-rich foods. Go easy on foods with added sugars and those high in fat. They have calories but few vitamins or minerals. Be a good role model by eating healthfully yourself.
- Get your child off to a great start in life. Help her learn to eat a variety of healthful foods and be physically active.
- Children need at least 60 minutes of physical activity most, preferably all, days of the week.

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