

Children's Nutrition

The Basics

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

The best nutrition advice to keep your child healthy includes encouraging her 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. Get the whole family on the program. It is much easier if everyone in the house follows these guidelines, than if your child has to do it alone. Plan a fun, family event, and get out and get some exercise.

Preparing low-fat meals, and buying low-calorie snacks and desserts, low fat or skim milk will help save excess calories (if necessary). Avoid buying high calorie items, such as snack chips, regular soft drinks or regular ice cream. Remember to treat these items as special treats, to be enjoyed once in a while.

The Food Pyramid

The Food Pyramid 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 Guide 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 sparingly.



Well, there isn't a toddler food pyramid. The Kids' Food Guide Pyramid is for children aged 2-6 years, but you can still use it to guide what your younger toddler eats, including 6 servings of grains, 3 servings of vegetables, 2 servings of fruits, 2 servings from the milk/dairy group, 2 servings from the meat and protein group, and a limited amount of fats and sweets. Just remember that the serving sizes will be smaller for younger toddlers and about 1/2 of those listed in the Kids' Food Pyramid (for example, 1/2 piece of fresh fruit vs. a whole piece for older kids) and 1/4 an adult's serving size.

Although you shouldn't usually count calories, knowing how many calories your toddler needs can help when planning his diet and can also help reassure you that your child is getting enough to eat.

The average toddler needs about 1300 calories each day. Bigger kids will need a little more, and smaller kids, a little less. A good rule of thumb is that your toddler will need 40 calories each day for each inch of his height.

The Food Guide Pyramid shows a range of servings for each food group. How much you actually eat depends on your age and activity level. After the age of two or three years, you can begin to use 2%, low fat, or skim milk instead of whole milk. Your child's diet should resemble that of the rest of the families, with 3 meals and 2 nutritious snacks each day. You should limit milk and dairy products to about 16-24oz each day and juice to about 4-6oz each day and offer a variety of foods to encourage good eating habits later.

School-age boys and girls require about 1600 to 2400 calories each day, depending on their age and activity level. Once they hit their growth spurt, girls require an additional 200 calories and boys 500 calories. School age children will therefore require between the low and middle range of servings. Children who are overweight should eat the lowest range of servings.

When determining how many servings to eat, it is important to look at the serving size. Larger portions should count as more than one serving, and smaller portions will count as only a part of a serving.

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 and for a 2200 calorie diet, 73g of fat each day. 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 in foods can supply a large amount of calories with little nutritional value. Because of their lack of nutritional value, they should be limited. Save your calories for more nutritionally complete foods. Sources of sugars 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

Examples:	<u>Food Servings</u>	<u>Grams of Fat</u>
Butter, margarine,	1 tsp.	4
Mayonnaise,	1 tbs.	11
Salad dressing, Reg.	1 tbs.	8
Sour cream,	1 tbs.	2.5
Cream cheese,	1 oz. (2T)	10
Milk chocolate,	1.5 oz. bar	13

Milk, Yogurt and Cheese

Dairy products provide protein, vitamins and minerals and are an excellent source of calcium. Your school age child should have 2 to 3 servings of milk, yogurt and cheese each day. Usually, use whole milk until the age of two.

Selection tips:

- Choose skim milk and nonfat yogurt

- Avoid high fat cheese and ice cream

Examples:	<u>Food Servings</u>	<u>Grams of Fat</u>
Skim milk,	1 cup	Trace
1% milk	1 cup	2.6
2% milk,	1 cup	4.7
Whole milk,	1 cup	8.1
Chocolate milk, Low fat	1 cup	3
Nonfat yogurt,	8 oz.	Trace
Low fat yogurt, (1.5% fat)	1 cup	3
Frozen yogurt,	1/2 cup	4
Process cheese	1 oz.	6
Mozzarella, part skim	1 oz	5
Cottage cheese, Creamed	4 oz	5
Ice cream (10%)	1/2 cup	7
Ice milk	1/2 cup	3

Meat, Poultry, Fish, Dry Beans, Eggs and Nuts

Foods in this group provide protein, and vitamins and minerals, including B vitamins, iron and zinc. You should have 2 to 3 servings of foods from this group each day, including the equivalent of 5 to 7 ounces of lean meat.

Selection tips:

- A serving from this food group can include 2-3 ounces of lean meat, poultry or fish, which may be an average hamburger or medium chicken breast half.
- Choices with the least fat include lean meat, poultry without skin, fish, and dry beans and peas.
- Prepare meats in low fat ways, by trimming away fat, and broiling, roasting, or boiling rather than frying.
- Remember that nuts and seed are high in fat, and egg yolks are high in cholesterol, so you should eat them in moderation.

Examples:	<u>Food Servings</u>	<u>Grams of Fat</u>
Lean meat, salmon	3 oz	9
Poultry, no skin	1/2 breast	4
Fish, trout, cooked	3 oz	6
Ground beef, lean	3.5 oz	18
Chicken, with skin, fried	(6 oz) breast	28
Bologna,	1 slice	8
Egg,	1	5
Dry beans and peas,	1/2 cup (1 oz)	Trace
Peanut butter,	1 oz	16
Nuts,	1 oz	14

Vegetables

Vegetables supply you with vitamins, including vitamin A and C, and folate, as well as, minerals, such as iron and magnesium. Plus they are low in fat and high in fiber, a great combination. You should have 2 to 4 servings of vegetables each day.

Selection tips:

- You should eat a variety of vegetables to provide you with all of the different nutrients that they supply, including dark green leafy vegetables, deep yellow vegetables, starchy vegetables (potatoes, corn, peas), legumes (navy, pinto and kidney beans), and other vegetables (lettuce, tomatoes, onions, green beans).
- Do not add a lot of fat to the vegetables you eat; avoid adding toppings, such as butter, mayonnaise, and salad dressings.

Examples:	Food Servings	Grams of Fat
Vegs, cooked,	1/2 cup	Trace
Vegs, leafy, raw	1 cup	Trace
Vegs, non-leafy, raw,	1/2 cup	Trace
Potatoes, scalloped,	1/2 cup	5
Potato salad,	1/2 cup	10
French fries, McDonald's	4 oz	17

Fruits

Fruits and 100% fruit juices provide Vitamin A and C and potassium. They are also low in fat and sodium. You should have 2-4 servings of fruit each day.

Selection tips:

Eat fresh fruits and 100 % fruit juices and avoid canned fruit in heavy syrups and sweetened fruit juices. According to the American Academy of Pediatrics, 100% fruit juice may substitute for half of your child's recommended servings of fruit each day.

Selection tips:

- Eat whole fruits.
- Eat citrus fruits, melons, and berries, which are high in Vitamin C.

Examples:	<u>Food Servings</u>	<u>Grams of Fat</u>
Whole fruit	1	Trace
Fruit, raw or canned,	1/2 cup	Trace
Fruit juice, unsweetened,	3/4 cup	Trace
Avocado,	1/5 whole	5g

Bread, Cereal, Rice and Pasta

Foods from this group provide complex carbohydrates (starches) and provide vitamins, minerals, and fiber. You need at least 6 to 11 servings of foods from this food group each day.

Selection tips:

- Choose whole grain breads and cereals for added fiber.
- Choose foods that are low in fat and sugars.
- Avoid adding calories and fat to foods in this group by not adding spreads or toppings high in fat.

Examples:	<u>Food Servings</u>	<u>Grams of Fat</u>
Bread, white	1 slice	1
Hamburger roll	2	2
Tortilla, flour	1 - 6"	2
Rice, pasta,	1/2 cup	Trace
Breakfast cereals,	1 oz	varies
Pancakes,	1 - 4"	3.5
Croissant,	1 med	13
Doughnut, cake	1 medium	10
Danish,	1 - 4"	15
Cake,	1 slice (1/12 cake)	6
Cookies, Chips Ahoy	3	8

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 later in life.

School age children require about 800 mg of calcium each day. Once they begin puberty, their calcium requirements will increase to about 1200 mg each day.

See the table below for the calcium content of common foods and check the nutrition label when choosing foods to find the highest calcium content. Also look for food items that are fortified with calcium.

Examples:	<u>Food Servings</u>	<u>Calcium Content</u>
Milk, whole or low fat	1 cup	300 mg
Black beans	1/2 cup	24 mg
White beans	1/2 cup	85 mg
Nuts	1/2 cup	125mg
Broccoli, cooked	1/2 cup	42 mg

Cheddar cheese	1 oz	204 mg
Yogurt, lowfat	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.

Adolescents require about 10 to 12 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).

Examples:	<u>Food Servings</u>	<u>Iron Content</u>
Beef,	3.5 oz	2-3g
Chicken	3.5 oz	.7g
Liver, beef	3.5 oz	6.3g
Tuna	3 oz	1.3g
Peanut butter	2 T.	.6g
Nuts	1 oz	1g
Seeds	1 oz	1.5g
Pinto beans	1c	4g
Spinach	1/2c	3g
Greens, turnip/collard, cooked	1/2c	1g
Strawberries, raw	1c	.5g
Tomato juice	6 oz	1g
Squash, Summer, cooked	1/2c	.5g
Whole grain bread	1sl	.8g
Raisins	2/3c	2g

Adapted from keepkidshealthy.com, 2004