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## Feeding Children: A Parents Guide

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# Feeding Children

## A Parents Guide

Children need a variety of food for their bodies to feel good, look good and grow. No single food can give them all the nutrients they need. They need variety at every meal, every day. Following the 2005 Dietary Guidelines and MyPyramid.gov will help your child grow healthfully.

### Make Half Your Grains Whole

Serve whole grain bread and cereals.

### Concentrate on Calcium

Serve 1%, low-fat, or skim milk and dairy products.

### Vary Your Veggies

Offer a variety of dark green and dark orange vegetables. Serve them raw or steamed to retain the most vitamins.

### Focus on Fruit

Serve a variety of canned, frozen, dried or fresh fruit. Go easy on the juices.

### Go Lean with Protein

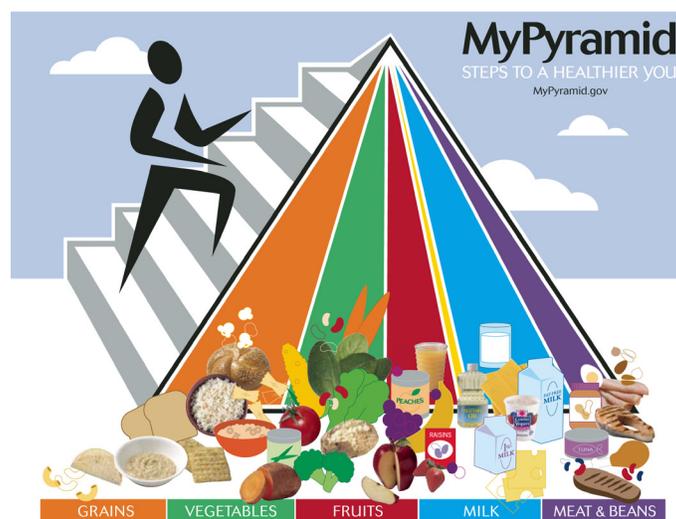
Serve low-fat or lean meat and poultry. Bake it, grill it or broil it.

### Limit the Fats

Choose fats from fish, nuts and oils. Watch your child's intake of saturated fats such as butter, stick margarine, shortening and lard.

### Don't Sugar Coat

To help prevent cavities, limit your child's intake of punch, soda and other drinks with added sugar.



## MyPyramid Food Intake Pattern Calorie Levels

MyPyramid recommends a calorie level based on an individual's sex, age and activity level. The chart below identifies the calorie levels for males and females by age and activity level. Calorie levels are provided for each year of childhood, from 2-9 years of age.

### Calorie levels\* by age and activity level\*\*.

Age	Males			Females		
	Sedentary	Moderately active	Active	Sedentary	Moderately active	Active
2	1,000	1,000	1,000	1,000	1,000	1,000
3	1,000	1,400	1,400	1,000	1,200	1,400
4	1,200	1,400	1,600	1,200	1,400	1,400
5	1,200	1,400	1,600	1,200	1,400	1,600
6	1,400	1,600	1,800	1,200	1,400	1,600
7	1,400	1,600	1,800	1,200	1,600	1,800
8	1,400	1,600	2,000	1,400	1,600	1,800
9	1,600	1,800	2,000	1,400	1,800	2,000

Source: U.S. Department of Agriculture, Center for Nutrition Policy and Promotion, April 2005, CNPP-XX.

\*Calorie levels are based on the Estimated Energy Requirements (EER) and activity levels from the Institute of Medicine Dietary Reference Intakes Macronutrients Report, 2002.

\*\*Activity levels: Sedentary = less than 30 minutes a day of moderate physical activity in addition to daily activities;

moderately active = at least 30 minutes up to 60 minutes a day of moderate physical activity in addition to daily activities;

active = 60 or more minutes a day of moderate physical activity in addition to daily activities.

## Teaching healthy eating

- Serve healthy foods and encourage your child to try new foods.
- Let your child help with food shopping and cooking.
- Be a good role model by eating healthy foods yourself.
- Limit the amount of fast food your child eats.
- In restaurants, help your child make healthy choices.
- Serve meals and snacks around the same time every day.

## Introducing new foods

- Serve your child's favorite food along with new foods.
- Encourage your child to eat a new food, but don't force it.
- Keep serving a new food even if your child has refused it. It takes about seven "hello bites" for your child to learn to like a new food.
- Serve small portions of new foods and let your child ask for more.
- Be a good role model. If you do not taste it, your child will not taste it either.

## "Choosy" Eaters

- Try not to label your child as a picky eater. All children go through food fads. Some kids react more to the taste, texture, smell and color of food.
- Young children often get on "food jags" and want the same thing daily. Typically, this behavior only lasts a short time. As long as your child is healthy and growing, there is no need to worry.

- If a child is going through a food jag or has strong food likes and dislikes, don't add to it by begging, forcing or insisting that he eat.
- Continue to offer foods from the other food groups to round out the child's intake.

## Making Meals Fun

- Eat meals together as a family.
- Sit at the table and turn off the TV during meals.
- Use your child's favorite plate, cup, bowl, spoon and fork.
- Do not use food to reward, bribe, or punish your child.

## The Importance of Breakfast

Many children do not eat breakfast. Children who are hungry "act out." These hungry children might be labeled as troublemakers, sleepy, slow, or inattentive. It is important to encourage your child to eat breakfast. Research shows children who eat breakfast:

- learn or play better than children who do not eat breakfast
- make fewer errors in school
- are more likely to get the nutrients they need
- have lower cholesterol levels than children who do not eat breakfast
- are more likely to maintain a healthy weight

## Snacks

Morning is not the only time that children might be hungry. Young children have small tummies. They cannot get all the calories they need in three meals a day. Young children need two to three additional snacks each day. These snacks should be chosen from the 2005 Dietary guidelines and [mypyramid.gov](http://mypyramid.gov).

Children who attend school or day care may eat lunch very early in the day. These children will be hungry when they come home. Have quick snacks ready for them to eat. Select snacks that round out what your child is already eating. Raw fruits and vegetables, low-fat or fat free dairy products, and whole grain cereals or crackers make great snacks.

## Finding the Balance between Food and Physical Activity

An overweight child is not a healthy child. If your child is overweight, encourage more physical activity. Play outside with your child. Simple games, walking, riding bikes and exploring the outdoors are great ways to get more physical activity.

- Encourage your child to make wise food choices by having healthy, low fat food items readily available.

- Don't have "junk" foods around to tempt your child.
- Serve low fat desserts. Cookies and cakes are party foods, not every day foods.
- Eat meals and snacks at regular times.
- Encourage your child to be active, not just busy. Limit TV time.
- Provide child-size servings. Allow "seconds" if he is still hungry.
- Do not make your child clean his plate. If he is full, he is finished eating.
- Discuss food choices, not his weight.
- Help your child accept his body. If obesity is extreme, you and your child need to discuss this with your health care provider and a Registered Dietitian (R.D.).

## Remember Your Jobs

Parents should:

- offer healthy choices
- encourage the family to sit at a table
- make mealtime fun
- set a regular mealtime
- skip the urge to reward, punish or appease your child with food

*Written by Louise Moore, MS, Extension Specialist for Nutrition Education Programs, 2006*

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