Having good nutrition means giving your body the food it needs to grow and stay healthy. Healthy eating habits help children have the energy they need physically, mentally, emotionally, and socially. It also helps them prevent and fight off illnesses. As parents and caregivers, you can help your children build healthy eating habits so they can make smart nutritional choices.
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It is important for parents and caregivers to know about proper nutrition for children and help them develop a lifestyle of healthy eating. This brochure provides nutritional tips for children ages 12 months and older.

FOOD GROUP DAILY RECOMMENDATION* EXAMPLES HEALTHY OPTIONS

Grains 3 to 7 ounces at least half should be whole grains
Bread, bulgur, cereal, cornmeal, couscous, grits, muffin, noodles, pasta, pita bread, rice, tortilla Low-fat popcorn, dry cereal (low in sugar), oatmeal, pretzels, fig bars, nix cake, whole-grain crackers, whole-wheat bread

Vegetables 1 to 3 cups
Asparagus, bean sprouts, bok choy, broccoli, cactus, carrots, collard greens, com, jicama, okra, peas, potato, spinach, squash, tomato
Baked potato, raw and cooked vegetables, sald and vegetable juices

Fruits 1 to 2 cups
Apple, banana, grapes, lychee, mango, melon, nectarine, orange, papaya, peach, plantains, strawberries, watermelon
Fresh fruit, unsweetened dried fruit including raisins

Protein 2 to 6 ounces
Beef, chick peas, dry beans, eggs, fish, lentils, nuts, poultry
Peanut butter spread, tofu, tuna

Dairy 2 to 3 cups
Cheese, milk (skim or 1%), yogurt
Cottage cheese, low-fat/frozen yogurt, ** natural cheese

* These amounts are appropriate for individuals who get less than 30 minutes of moderate physical activity, not including daily activities.
** Children younger than two years old should drink whole milk and should not eat reduced-fat foods.
*** For children younger than four years old, these foods can be choking hazards. Avoid giving large chunks of food.

FOOD FACTS
- Carbohydrates provide energy. Fat helps growth and brain development.
- If a child eats a diet based on My Plate, he will get the vitamins needed to be healthy. Give your child vitamins and supplements only if the pediatrician recommends doing so.
- Children should eat three full meals and two to three snacks every day.
- When a child becomes a toddler, her appetite often decreases. Try serving smaller amounts. If she wants more, offer a second serving. Do not force her to eat food.
- Healthy oils are fats that provide essential nutrients. Some oils are used in cooking, such as canola or olive oil. Other foods are naturally high in oils, such as nuts, fish, and avocados.
- Foods labeled "reduced-fat" may have high amounts of sugar.
- When a child eats more calories than he uses up in physical energy, he can become overweight. Watching television and snacking for several hours at a time on a regular basis can lead to obesity.

GREEN TIPS
- Serve lean meats: Fish, lean beef cuts, skinless chicken, and turkey.
- Instead of butter, use soft margarine with zero trans fat and vegetable oils made from canola, corn, olives, soybeans, or sunflowers.
- Use fat-free cooking methods like baking, grilling, poaching, roasting, or steaming.
- Read nutrition labels to make healthy decisions.
- Percent Daily Values are based on calorie levels for adults. Foods intended for children have a Nutrition Facts panel that is specific for children.
- Serve meals with small amounts of fat, cholesterol, salt (sodium), and sugar.
- If your child often refuses food, try offering a variety of healthy choices. Avoid bargaining and begging to get your child to eat. (For example, if your child refuses milk, try offering cheese or a fruit smoothie made with milk.)
- Do not keep supplies of snacks high in fat and sugar at home. Buy what you need for special occasions.
- Practice food safety: Wash your hands, rinse and dry fruits and vegetables, and clean surfaces that come into contact with food. Keep raw, cooked, and ready-to-eat foods separate while shopping, storing, and preparing foods. Make sure foods are cooked to a safe temperature and refrigerate perishable foods quickly.
- If you feel your child is overweight or has unhealthy eating habits, talk to her doctor or a registered dietitian for recommendations.
- Practice healthy eating: Help your child to eat. (For example, if your child refuses milk, try offering cheese or a fruit smoothie made with milk.)
- Children’s early eating experiences affect their future eating habits.
- For children younger than two years old, do not restrict fat or calories unless the doctor says to. Keep in mind that the amount they eat will vary because their diets are changing.

HEALTHY TIPS
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HEALTHY FOODS, HEALTHY KIDS
BOOKS FOR CHILDREN
- EATING THE ALPHABET: FRUITS AND VEGETABLES FROM A TO Z
Lois Ehlert
- RIDING A TRICYCLE... SLEDDING OR ICE SKATING
Saxton Freyman & Joost Elffers

BOOKS FOR ADULTS
- HEALTHY FOODS, HEALTHY KIDS
Elizabeth M. Ward, M.S., R.D.

ALLERGIES & SPECIAL NEEDS
Food allergies are common in many children. For children with special needs, their developmental disabilities or food allergies may require special diet plans.
- Seek help from health consultants, other parents, pediatricians, and therapists.
- You may need to give special attention to amounts of food, frequency of feeding, medication, special equipment, or types of food.
- Some common food allergies are cow’s milk, citrus fruits and juice, egg whites, nuts, and wheat.
- Some symptoms of allergies are coughing, diarrhea, itching, nausea, rashes, runny nose, sneezing, stomach pain, swelling, and vomiting.
- If your child has allergies, always check a food’s ingredients.

Be a good example by eating healthfully yourself. Allow children to help you prepare meals. When introducing new food to your child, start with a small serving and offer more if he asks.

EXERCISE
- Children should have at least 60 minutes of physical activity each day.
- Limit the amount of time children spend doing activities that do not require physical movement like watching television, using the computer, and playing video games.
- Because of funding, some schools are not able to offer recommended amounts of physical education. Some alternative ways for children to exercise are:

TO LEARN MORE
- Dancing
- Riding a tricycle
- Swimming
- Dancing
- Jumping rope
- Bicycle, scooter, or skateboard
- Swimming
- Playing at a park
- Playing in a park
- Roller skating or rollerblading
- Taking walks
- Throwing balls
- Sledding or ice skating
- Taking walks
- Throwing balls

BOOKS FOR CHILDREN
- EATING THE ALPHABET: FRUITS AND VEGETABLES FROM A TO Z
Lois Ehlert
- RIDING A TRICYCLE... SLEDDING OR ICE SKATING
Saxton Freyman & Joost Elffers

BOOKS FOR ADULTS
- HEALTHY FOODS, HEALTHY KIDS
Elizabeth M. Ward, M.S., R.D.

THE FAMILY NUTRITION BOOK
William Sears, M.D. & Martha Sears, R.N.

ORGANIZATIONS
- MyPlate: 888-779-7264 or www.choosemyplate.gov
- KidsHealth: www.kidshealth.org
**MY PLATE**

My Plate is a general guide that informs families about various nutrients they need, based on their age, gender, and activity level.

**FOOD GROUP**

**DAILY RECOMMENDATION**

**EXAMPLES**

**HEALTHY OPTIONS**

### Grains

3 to 7 ounces at least half should be whole grains

- Bread, bulgur, cereal, cornmeal, couscous, grits, muffin, noodles, pasta, pita bread, rice, tortilla

- Low-fat popcorn, dry cereal (low in sugar), oatmeal, pretzels; fig bars, rice cake, whole-grain crackers, whole-wheat bread

### Vegetables

1 to 3 cups

- Asparagus, bean sprouts, bok choy, broccoli, carrot,*** collard greens, corn,*** jicama, okra, peas,*** potato, spinach, squash, tomato

- Baked potato, raw and cooked vegetables, salads, and vegetable juices

### Fruits

1 to 2 cups

- Apple, banana, grapes,***lychee, mango, melon, nectarine, orange, papaya, peach, plantains, strawberries, watermelon

- Fresh fruit, unsweetened dried fruit including raisins***

### Protein

2 to 6 ounces

- Beef, chick peas, dry beans, eggs, fish, lentils, nuts,***poultry

- Peanut butter spread, tofu, tuna

### Dairy

2 to 3 cups

- Cheese, milk (skim or 1%),***yogurt

- Cottage cheese, low-fat/frozen yogurt,** natural cheese (cheddar, Swiss)

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** Children younger than two years old should drink whole milk and should not eat reduced-fat foods.

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Healthy eating begins with healthy shopping. Buy foods and cooking ingredients that are healthy.

Eating a healthy breakfast every morning helps children focus and stay fit.

Healthy oils are fats that provide essential nutrients. Some oils are used in cooking, such as canola or olive oil. Other foods are naturally high in oils, such as nuts, fish, and avocados.

- Foods labeled “reduced-fat” may have high amounts of sugar.

- When a child eats more calories than he uses up in physical energy, he can become overweight. Watching television and snacking for several hours at a time on a regular basis can lead to obesity.

To learn more, visit www.choosemyplate.gov/for-kids

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**HEALTHY TIPS**

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- Instead of butter, use soft margarine with zero trans fat and vegetable oils made from canola, corn, olives, soybeans, or sunflowers.

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- Read nutrition labels to make healthy decisions. Percent Daily Values are based on calorie levels for adults. Foods intended for children have a Nutrition Facts Panel that is specific for children.

- Serve meals with small amounts of fat, cholesterol, salt (sodium), and sugar.

- If your child often refuses food, try offering a variety of healthy choices. Avoid bargaining and begging to get your child to eat. (For example, if your child refuses milk, try offering cheese or a fruit smoothie made with milk.)

- Do not keep supplies of snacks high in fat and sugar at home. Buy what you need for special occasions.

- Practice food safety: Wash your hands, rinse and dry fruits and vegetables, and clean surfaces that come into contact with food. Keep raw, cooked, and ready-to-eat foods separate while storing, shopping, and preparing foods. Make sure foods are cooked to a safe temperature and refrigerate perishable foods quickly.

- If you feel your child is overweight or has unhealthy eating habits, talk to her doctor or a registered dietitian for recommendations.

- If your child attends child care or school, find out what type of meals and snacks are given and how often they are given.

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**ALLERGIES & SPECIAL NEEDS**

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**EXERCISE**

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- Limit the amount of time children spend doing activities that do not require physical movement like watching television, using the computer, and playing video games.

- Because of funding, some schools are not able to offer recommended amounts of physical education. Some alternative ways for children to exercise are:
  - Dancing
  - Jumping rope
  - Playing at a park or skateboard
  - Playing sports
  - Playing tag
  - Riding a tricycle, bicycle, scooter, or skateboard
  - Playing basketball
  - Playing tennis
  - Swimming
  - Taking walks
  - Throwing balls

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**FOOD FACTS**

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**TO LEARN MORE**

**BOOKS FOR CHILDREN**

- FOOD FOR THOUGHT
  - Stone Friedman & Joost Elffers

- EATING THE ALPHABET: FRUITS AND VEGETABLES FROM A TO Z
  - Saxton Freyman & Joost Elffers

**BOOKS FOR ADULTS**

- HEALTHY FOODS, HEALTHY KIDS
  - Elizabeth M. Ward, M.S., R.D.

- THE FAMILY NUTRITION BOOK
  - William Sears, M.D., & Martha Sears, R.N.

**ORGANIZATIONS**

- MYPLATE (888) 779-7264 or www.choosemyplate.gov

- KIDSHEALTH (888) 779-7264 or www.choosemyplate.gov

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