

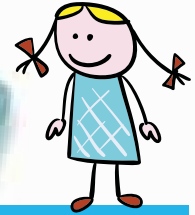
Feeding Children Ages 2 to 5



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It's all about habits



Early childhood is a critical learning period, during which children aged two to five develop eating habits that will influence their relationship with food for a lifetime. *Feeding Children Ages 2 to 5* offers current information on feeding young children and practical tips to help children adopt healthy eating habits.

Mom, I'm hungry!

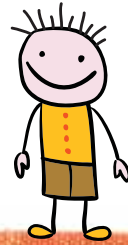
Preschoolers need a balanced and varied diet that provides all the elements required for growth and development.

- Respect their appetites. Every child grows at a different rate and this influences how much they want to eat. Appetite may vary from one day to the next and even from one meal to the other. Children have the ability to recognize when they are hungry and when they are full.
- Offer children three meals plus snacks every day to help fuel them with energy throughout the day. Children have small stomachs, and relatively large energy and nutrient needs, so it's important to offer small quantities of nutritious food several times a day.
- Maintain a consistent meal and snack schedule. Children need this type of structure.
- Offer a snack halfway between meals, or if possible, two hours before a meal to avoid decreasing a child's appetite at mealtime.
- Avoid nibbling or grazing between meals and snacks.



A second helping?

A growing child can usually decide how much food to eat by himself. However, it is good to observe a child and pay attention to things that may lead to eating that aren't related to being hungry. What leads a child to eat? If a child turns to food for comfort or reward, or eats when emotional, it becomes important to help him learn to pay better attention to signals of being hungry or full.



A few tips

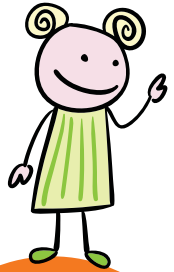
- Eat slowly and encourage children to do the same.
- Wait until everyone at the table has finished their first serving before offering a second.
- Sit together at the table during mealtime. Avoid watching television, arguing or other distractions.
- Never put children on a diet, regardless of age, before consulting a doctor or a dietitian specializing in the field.



Picky eaters!

Young children are very curious and always ready to explore new foods. The sooner they are introduced to a wide variety of healthy foods, the better the chances they will accept and enjoy them.

Golden rules:



- Set a good example! Children learn by imitation.
- Avoid disguising food. Children need to know what they're eating and you may lose their trust if they find that they've been tricked.
- Introduce a new food with familiar foods.
- Offer new foods regularly and encourage children to try a bite. Be patient and keep trying! You may have to offer a child the same food up to 15 times before they find it appealing.
- Serve small portions or help children serve themselves.
- Present foods in an original and fun way with a variety of shapes, colours, flavours and textures. For children, eating is as much about appearance as it is about taste.
- Involve children in food preparation. They may be more willing to taste their own creations.
- Let children decide how much they want to eat and in what order. If they haven't eaten a bite after 20 minutes, simply remove the plate while remaining calm.
- Don't worry; even if your child does not eat perfectly balanced meals every day, it is unlikely to affect growth and health.
- Have courage! Eighty percent of 5-year-old children are considered to be fussy eaters during meals, yet by 7 years of age, only 23% remain fussy.

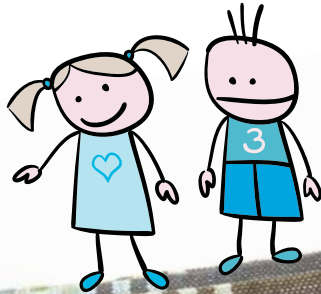


Two more bites and you can have your dessert!

"If you're good, you'll get cookies! Be a good boy/girl and eat all your beans!
Finish your meat and you'll get some rice!"

Food is often used as a reward or negotiating tool. Children who are punished or rewarded with food may ignore signals of being hungry or full, and will find the reward-food more appealing. A suggested rule of thumb: without pressure, ensure that children have one bite of each food served. Reward them with something other than food. For example:

- Play their favourite game with them.
- Give them a hug.
- Give them a sticker.
- Read them a story.





Eating well to grow well

A child's diet should include foods from the four food groups in *Canada's Food Guide* to help ensure that he consumes the nutrients needed for growth and health, as well as a variety of great tasting food. A variety of food each day helps eliminate the need for a vitamin supplement. If a child chooses a limited variety of foods and is in good health, there is no need to worry. This is common and usually does not last long. Plan meals and snacks to help your child eat well throughout the day:

Breakfast	Offer foods from at least three food groups (e.g., breakfast cereal, milk, banana)
Lunch and supper	Offer foods from all four food groups (e.g., legume loaf, green beans, brown rice, milk)
Snacks	Give children two to three snacks a day, depending on their appetite, which include foods from two food groups (e.g., morning snack: peaches with yogurt; afternoon snack: crackers and cheese)

A healthy dose of vitamins

PEPPERS, MELON, BROCCOLI, KIWI... Vegetables and fruit offer great health benefits. In general, the more colourful they are, the richer they are in vitamins.



Remember...

Offer vegetables and fruit every day. One green vegetable (e.g., spinach, asparagus) and one orange vegetable (e.g., carrots, pumpkin) should be on the menu each day.

Choose fresh or frozen vegetables and fruit. When opting for the canned variety, rinse the vegetables before eating to reduce the sodium content and choose fruit packed in juice, with no added sugar.

Choose vegetables and fruit over juice. Their fibre content helps satisfy appetites and regulates intestinal function.



No peas, please!

Some children refuse to eat certain vegetables because of their stronger acidic or bitter taste. To help them enjoy vegetables:

- Serve vegetables without utensils, so they can eat and explore with their fingers.
- Serve them with a dip or topped with a white or cheese sauce.
- Cut them in various ways: julienned, sliced, cubed, grated, etc.
- Serve them in a variety of dishes: soup, salad, etc.
- Present them in various textures: cooked, raw, half-cooked, puréed, etc.
- Add them to dishes children enjoy.

Including fibre on the menu



BREAD, PASTA, RICE, COUSCOUS, PITA, TORTILLAS...

Young children usually enjoy a variety of grain products.

Choosing whole grain products is an opportunity to increase dietary fibre. Grain products provide energy (carbohydrates) to the body and brain, and contain several other important nutrients, such as folic acid, zinc and iron.



Remember...

Boxed breakfast cereals are a good choice for breakfast or snacks, as long as they are low in sugar and made with whole grains.

At least half of the grain products consumed each day should be whole grains.

Caution!

Limit the consumption of processed foods such as pastries, granola bars or store bought cookies. These foods may be low in nutrients and are often high in fat or sugar.

Calcium and MUCH more

MILK, YOGURT, CHEESE... A child's growth depends on bone development. Milk products provide more than 15 nutrients, some of which help young bones develop properly (e.g., calcium, vitamin D, protein). White or chocolate milk, yogurt and cheese are considered to be the most reliable sources of calcium – they contain large amounts of calcium that the body absorbs well.



Remember...

In Canada, cow's milk must be fortified with vitamin D, a vitamin which is essential for calcium absorption. Children and adults alike should drink 500 ml (2 cups) of milk a day to help meet their vitamin D needs.

Whole milk (3.25% M.F.) and 2% M.F. partly skimmed milk contain essential fatty acids that promote brain growth and development in children. These foods can be suitable for children, depending on their individual needs.

Offer cheese made with pasteurized milk to prevent food-borne illnesses.

If children do not drink milk, they should be given fortified soy beverages.



Did you know?

Milk products do not increase mucus production or promote the thickening of saliva during a cold or flu.

Chocolate milk contains the same nutrients as white milk and no more sugar than an equal amount of unsweetened apple juice.

Few children three years of age and under are unable to digest lactose, the sugar naturally found in milk. If a child experiences digestive upset, it is important that a physician confirm the food that is causing this discomfort. Eliminating milk products can unnecessarily deprive a child of important nutrients. If a child is lactose intolerant, firm cheese, yogurt and small quantities of white or chocolate milk can often be consumed, according to tolerance.

calcium and much more

To ensure that children consume 500 ml (2 cups) of milk daily:

- Set a good example by drinking milk at meals.
- Serve children a small quantity of milk at one time.
- Encourage children to get themselves a glass of milk.
- Serve milk in fun glasses or with a colourful straw.
- Break out of the routine by offering chocolate milk or adding vanilla, ground cinnamon or cocoa powder to milk.
- Prepare milk-based recipes: smoothie, pudding, soup, white sauce, etc.



Making room for protein

MEAT, POULTRY, FISH, EGGS, LEGUMES...

Meat and meat alternatives are important sources of protein. In addition, these foods are also sources of iron, a nutrient needed to carry oxygen in the blood.

Incidentally, it is important for children to obtain enough iron from their diets since iron deficiency anemia is common in young children.



Making room for protein

Remember...

Iron from animal sources, found in meat, poultry and fish, is absorbed much more easily than iron from plant sources, found in dark green vegetables, legumes, tofu and enriched grain products.

Eating a food rich in vitamin C with meals (e.g., kiwi, melon, citrus fruit, strawberries, peppers, tomato) increases the absorption of iron from grains and vegetables.

To prevent food-borne illnesses, avoid serving children raw fish (e.g., sushi) or undercooked meat.

Fatty fish (e.g., salmon) is a source of essential fatty acids called "omega-3s", which are essential for brain development. Children should consume fatty fish twice a week.

For more information on recommendations related to fish consumption, consult the Health Canada site at www.hc-sc.gc.ca.





I don't want any meat!

It may sometimes be difficult for a child to eat some types of meat since some are more difficult to chew. Here are a few tips to encourage meat consumption:

- Offer small portions of very tender meat cooked in a broth.
- Serve meat in a sauce or as a meatloaf.
- Cut meat into small cubes or offer ground meat.
- Offer other foods from this group that are easier to chew: eggs, tofu, legumes, fish or peanut butter.

Valuable Fats

Fats are an essential part of a healthy diet, especially for preschoolers. Fat provides a feeling of fullness that helps take children to their next meal or snack and is a concentrated source of energy that helps children meet their high energy needs. Fat is also essential for the development of the brain and nervous system.

Remember...

Don't hesitate to serve nutritious foods that contain fat, such as avocado, peanut butter and cheese.

Limit the consumption of foods that are high in fat and low in nutritional value, such as chips, French fries and cakes as these may spoil a child's appetite and displace healthier foods.

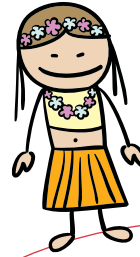
"Regular" (vs. lower fat or "light") food group products are appropriate for children.

Use different types of oils and non-hydrogenated fats (e.g., vegetable oil, margarine, butter, salad dressings), favouring those that are unsaturated.



Dad, I'm thirsty!

Children are at greater risk of dehydration than adults because they are less sensitive to thirst. Fluid is very important, particularly when it is hot and humid outside as children are more susceptible to heatstroke.



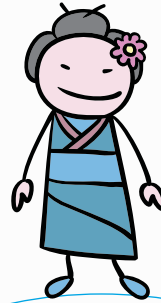
Water: The drink of choice between meals and snacks as it doesn't affect appetite.

White or chocolate milk: Serve with meals and snacks. If a child is hungry as well as thirsty between meals and snacks, milk is a great choice. Not only does it satisfy thirst, milk also satisfies hunger.

Fruit juice: It is recommended to limit the amount of 100% pure fruit juice to 125-175 ml ($\frac{1}{2}$ - $\frac{3}{4}$ cup) per day.

Other drinks: Avoid the consumption of soft drinks, fruit drinks, fruit cocktails or sport drinks. These beverages are low in nutrients and offer no benefits to a child's diet.

What about
that smile?



For healthy teeth:

- Limit the consumption of acidic and sugary drinks, such as fruit juice, fruit drinks and soft drinks. If a child does consume one of these beverages, it is best to let him drink it all at once instead of allowing him to sip small mouthfuls at a time. This reduces the time these beverages are in contact with teeth and reduces the risk of cavities.
- Limit the consumption of sticky foods, such as granola bars, candy and fruit rolls.
- Choose whole grains over refined grains. The dietary fibre content reduces the risk of cavities.

Foods that are good for teeth

- Fresh vegetables and fruit: because they contain fibre, they require a lot of chewing which stimulates the production of saliva and therefore decreases the risk of decay.
- Meat and meat alternatives (e.g., poultry, fish, legumes) contain mainly protein and/or fat, which cannot serve as food for bacteria.
- Milk products support dental health: their nutrients neutralize acid in the mouth and form a protective film on the tooth surface. This limits bacteria's access to the teeth and protects tooth enamel. The best milk product for teeth: firm cheese. For maximum protection, offer it at the end of a meal or snack.



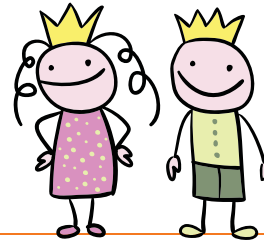
Preventing Choking

Because of the small size of their esophagus, preschool children are at high risk of choking when they eat. Choking on food is one of the leading causes of accidental death in children under the age of four. Therefore, it is important to be extremely cautious.

To reduce the risk of choking:

- Always eat when calm and sitting down.
- Ensure that children are supervised by an adult while eating.
- Do not allow children to eat in the car.
- Do not let children talk, walk, run or play with food in their mouths.
- Encourage children to take small mouthfuls and to chew food properly.
- Avoid foods such as crunchy peanut butter, popcorn, candy, chewing gum and ice cubes.

**Serve foods
that have been
prepared safely**



Firm vegetables
(e.g., carrots, turnip, celery)

Blanch, cut into thin strips or grate.

Fresh fruit

Remove the fruit's seeds, pit and core.

Round fruit
(e.g., grapes, large blueberries, cherries, strawberries)

Cut in two or four, depending on size.

Dried fruit
(e.g., dates, figs, apricots, raisins)

Rehydrate or chop.

Sausages

Cut lengthwise, then into small pieces.

Whole nuts, seeds and peanuts

Grind and add to recipes.

Peanut butter

Creamy only. Spread a thin layer on a hot slice of toast.

Fish

Remove bones and serve in small pieces.

Meat and poultry

Remove bones and serve in small pieces.



Preventing Constipation



- Adequate intake of fluids and fibre (e.g., whole grain products, fresh vegetables and fruit, legumes) helps prevent constipation.
- Contrary to popular belief, no single food causes constipation. There is no reason to eliminate bananas, rice or cheese from a child's diet.
- To establish a routine for bowel movements: encourage children to go to the bathroom soon after meals, even if they don't feel the need.
- Encourage children to be active. In addition to being beneficial to overall health, physical activity also increases intestinal motility.
- If your child becomes constipated or if you have any other food-related questions, do not hesitate to consult a doctor or dietitian.

The team of Registered Dietitians at Dairy Farmers of Canada would like to thank the following people for reviewing the content:

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A few resources:

Public Health Agency of Canada: <http://www.phac-aspc.gc.ca>

Institut national de santé publique du Québec: <http://www.inspq.qc.ca>

Dietitians of Canada: <http://www.dietitians.ca>

Health Canada: <http://www.hc-sc.gc.ca>

Canadian Paediatric Society: <http://www.cps.ca>

www.dairygoodness.ca

