

How to Build a Healthy Preschooler

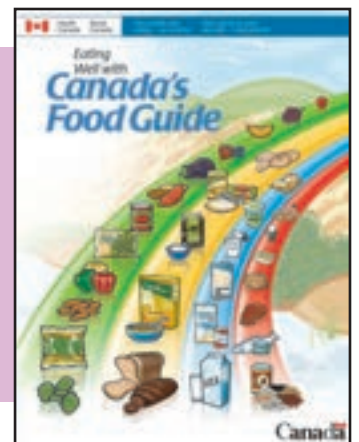
- A** A healthy preschooler starts with healthy eating and physical activity habits.
- B** Balanced meals include a variety of foods from at least three of the four food groups.
- C** Canada's Food Guide includes foods from the four food groups – Vegetables and Fruit, Grain Products, Milk and Alternatives, Meat and Alternatives.
- D** Don't pressure or bribe your child to eat or to eat certain foods. The more a parent pushes foods, the less likely a child is to eat them.
- E** Eating together should be enjoyable and fun for you and your family.
- F** Food jags are periods of time when children will only eat a few kinds of foods. Be patient and try not to worry, especially if your child is active, growing and healthy.
- G** Growth is affected by many things. Each child is different and children can grow and develop at very different rates. It is important to watch your child's own growth pattern.
- H** Help children learn by setting a good example. Eat with them at the table and eat well yourself by choosing a variety of foods.
- I** It's never too early to start building healthy habits. Healthy eating and regular physical activity are key to healthy growing children.
- J** Juice intake should be limited to no more than 125–175 mL (4-6 oz) a day.
- K** Keep a variety of healthy, ready to eat snacks available such as fresh fruit, cut up vegetables, yogurt, pretzels, cereal and milk.
- L** Let your child decide how much food to eat from the healthy choices you offer.
- M** Milk and Alternatives are important for growth as well as healthy bones and teeth, but too much milk can be filling and leave little room for other healthy foods.
- N** New foods that are offered over and over again will encourage children to try and taste them, but it may take 10–15 times before they actually eat them!
- O** Offer at least one food your child likes, as well as familiar and new foods at meals. Children will likely be more interested and hungry to eat.
- P** Playing actively indoors and outdoors should be fun and a regular part of every day. Children need to be physically active to grow up healthy.
- Q** Quality time with children includes playing active games together and eating family meals without TV or other distractions.
- R** Respect your child's appetite. Children are born with the ability to know when they are hungry and when they are full.
- S** Schedule meals and snacks at regular times so that children are hungry, but not too hungry, when it's time to eat and let them stop when they are full.
- T** The tiny tummies of children mean portion sizes need to be small. As children grow, portion size can grow too.
- U** Use meal and snack times as a chance to teach your children about different foods, food preparation and good table manners.
- V** Vitamin supplements are usually not necessary, even for picky eaters. Teach your children that good nutrition comes from food, not pills.
- W** Weight and height measurements should be taken regularly and plotted on a growth chart that is a part of your child's medical record with your health care provider.
- X** Expect your preschooler's appetite to vary from day to day.
- Y** Young children who are small eaters need to eat more often. They also need to eat nutritious, higher fat foods like peanut butter and cheese to meet their energy needs.
- Z** Zest for life is a preschooler! This is the age where at times, exploring and playing can be more interesting and important than eating.
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How Much Should My Child Eat?

Food Group	Age 3	Age 4 and 5	What is One Food Guide Serving?
Vegetables and Fruit <i>Eat one dark green and one orange vegetable each day.</i> 	4 Food Guide servings	5 Food Guide servings	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 1 piece of fruit • 125 mL (1/2 cup) of fresh, frozen or canned vegetables, tomato sauce • 125 mL (1/2 cup) of 100% fruit or vegetable juice • 250 mL (1 cup) of leafy raw vegetables or salad
Grain Products <i>Choose whole grain products each day.</i> 	3 Food Guide servings	4 Food Guide servings	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 1 slice of bread • 1/2 bagel or small muffin • 1/2 pita or 1/2 large tortilla • 125 mL (1/2 cup) of cooked rice, bulgur, quinoa, pasta or couscous • 175 mL (3/4 cup) of hot cereal • 30 g of cold cereal
Milk and Alternatives <i>Drink 500 mL (2 cups) of 1% or 2% milk each day.</i> 	2 Food Guide servings	2 Food Guide servings	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 250 mL (1 cup) milk or fortified soy beverage • 175 g (3/4 cup) yogurt • 50 g (1 1/2 oz) hard cheese
Meat and Alternatives <i>Have alternatives such as beans, lentils and tofu often.</i> 	1 Food Guide serving	1 Food Guide serving	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 2 eggs • 30 mL (2 Tbsp) of peanut butter or other nut butters • 60 mL (1/4 cup) of shelled nuts or seeds • 125 mL (1/2 cup) of cooked fish, shellfish, poultry, lean meat or game meat • 175 mL (3/4 cup) of cooked and canned beans, lentils, chickpeas, hummus, soybeans or tofu

GOOD TO KNOW:

Fish is an excellent source of protein and healthy fats. Serve at least two Food Guide Servings of fish a week. Some types of fish are high in mercury, which is harmful to a child's developing brain. Serve fish that are lower in mercury for the entire family such as char, herring, mackerel, rainbow trout and salmon. To find out more about choosing local fish wisely, check the Guide to Eating Ontario Sport Fish at www.ene.gov.on.ca/en/water/fishguide/index.php



Smart Snacks

For Thirsty Children

- Water
- Berries, watermelon, oranges, peaches, cantaloupe, pears or apples
- Cherry tomatoes or cucumber
- White or chocolate milk
- Yogurt beverages
- 100% fruit juice or vegetable juice



For Hungry Children

- Bean dips (hummus)
- Whole grain products (pita bread, bagel, muffin, crackers or bun)
- Raw vegetables (broccoli, cauliflower, sweet peas, snow peas or peppers)
- Plantain or yucca
- Banana, apricots or apple sauce
- Cereal
- Cheese
- Yogurt



NOTE: Nuts, seeds, popcorn, some raw fruits (e.g., grapes), and some raw vegetables (e.g., carrots) are good snacks but may cause choking in children under age four.

Always supervise young children when they are eating.

GOOD TO KNOW:

Avoid letting your preschooler nibble on food or sip beverages all day long as this can cause dental cavities.

Offer water to drink between meals, when preschoolers are active, and when the weather is hot.

A Sample Meal Plan

Breakfast

- 1 egg
- 1 slice whole wheat toast
- 1/2 banana
- 125 mL (1/2 cup) milk

Morning Snack

- 3–5 crackers
- 125 mL (1/2 cup) 100% fruit juice
- 15 mL (1 Tbsp) peanut butter

Noon Meal

- 1/2–1 grilled cheese sandwich
- 4–6 cucumber slices
- 125 mL (1/2 cup) milk
- 1 oatmeal cookie

Afternoon Snack

- 75 mL (1/3 cup) yogurt
- 1/2 peach cut in slices
- 125 mL (1/2 cup) water

Supper

- 25-50 g (1-2 oz) baked chicken
- 125 mL (1/2 cup) rice
- 125 mL (1/2 cup) cooked broccoli
- 125 mL (1/2 cup) milk
- 125 mL (1/2 cup) apple crisp

After Supper Snack

- 125 mL (1/2 cup) cereal
- 125 mL (1/2 cup) milk

Useful Measurements

50 mL= 1/4 cup or 4 Tablespoons

75 mL= 1/3 cup or 5 1/2 Tablespoons

125 mL= 1/2 cup or 8 Tablespoons

150 mL= 2/3 cup or 10 1/2 Tablespoons

175 mL= 3/4 cup or 12 Tablespoons

250 mL= 1 cup or 16 Tablespoons

Want More Information?

Books

- *The Family Table*. Marie Breton and Isabelle Emond, 2008.
- *Child of Mine: Feeding with Love and Good Sense*. Ellyn Satter, 2000.
- *Your Child's Weight... Helping Without Harming*. Ellyn Satter, 2005.
- *Secrets of Feeding a Healthy Family: Orchestrating and Enjoying the Family Meal*. Ellyn Satter, 2008.
- *Raising Vegetarian Children – A Guide to Good Health and Family Harmony*. J. Stephaniak and V. Melina, 2003.
- *Better Food for Kids: Your Essential Guide to Nutrition for all Children from Age 2 to 6*. J. Saab and D. Kalnins, 2002.
- *FitKids – A Practical Guide to Raising Healthy and Active Children from Birth to Teens*. Gavin, M; Dowshen, S; Izanberg, N. Heart and Stroke Foundation of Canada/Kids Health, 2004.
- *Add Cook!*, Dietitians of Canada, 2011.

Websites

- Canada's Food Guide: www.canadasfoodguide.net
- Food Allergy Network: www.foodallergy.org
- Anaphylaxis Canada: www.anaphylaxis.ca
- Best Start Resource Centre: www.beststart.org
- Dietitians of Canada: www.dietitians.ca
- Healthy Start for Life: www.dietitians.ca/healthystart
- Canada's Physical Activity Guide for Children: www.paguide.com
- Caring for Kids: www.caringforkids.cps.ca
- Kids Health and Safety: www.healthycanadians.gc.ca/kids/
- Public Health Agency of Canada: www.phac-aspc.gc.ca
- Health Canada: www.hc-sc.gc.ca
- Dairy Goodness: www.dairygoodness.ca
- NB Public Health: www.gnb.ca/publichealth
- Heart and Stroke: www.heartandstroke.com



Contacts

Contact your local public health office for:

- Information and questions about your child's eating habits.
- Handouts on growth, healthy eating, meal and snack ideas, picky eaters, healthy eating on a budget, reading food labels and more.
- Contact information for nutrition related support groups and agencies in your community.
- Parent education workshops.



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New Brunswick Department of Health, www.gnb.ca/health

This educational resource is part of the NutriSTEP® (Nutrition Screening Tool for Every Preschooler) Program.
For more information on NutriSTEP®, go to the Nutrition Resource Centre Website at www.nutritionrc.ca.

November 2011