

How to Raise a Healthy Preschooler

Ages 3-5

What is healthy eating for children?

- All foods can be part of healthy eating. But some foods are healthier than others. Following Canada's Food Guide is a good way to eat healthy.
- Canada's Food Guide includes foods from the four food groups – Vegetables and Fruit, Grain Products, Milk and Alternatives, Meat and Alternatives.



- Children are likely to get the nutrients they need to grow and stay healthy when meals include a variety of foods from at least three of the four food groups.



How are children's needs different than adults'?

- Children have tiny tummies. So for good health they need to eat more often than adults. That's why it's important to offer snacks in between meals.
- Some days your child may only eat a few bites at each meal, other days they may eat a lot. It is normal for preschoolers' appetites to vary from day to day. Let your child decide how much to eat from the healthy food choices you offer.
- Plan three meals and two or three snacks about two to three hours apart. That way children are hungry, but not too hungry, when it is time to eat.



- Keep portion sizes small. As children grow, portion sizes can grow too.
- Keep a variety of healthy, ready to eat snacks available, such as fresh fruit, cut up vegetables, yogurt, crackers, cereal and milk.
- Children need nutritious, higher fat foods such as peanut butter and cheese to meet their energy needs.
- Sometimes children will only eat a few kinds of foods. Be patient. Keep offering healthy foods.
- Vitamin supplements are usually not needed, even for picky eaters.



How do I get my child to eat well?

- Eating together should be enjoyable and fun for you and your family.
- Help children by setting a good example. Eat with them at the table. Eat well yourself by choosing a variety of foods.
- Offer small quantities of new foods alongside a familiar one. Don't pressure your child to eat the new food. If an unfamiliar food is not accepted the first time, offer it again another day. The more children are exposed to new foods, the more likely they will taste them and learn to accept them. You may have to offer the food ten or more times before your child will eat it.



- Children are born with the ability to know when they are hungry and when they are full. So when your child says they are full, avoid encouraging them to eat more. This helps them understand their hunger signs making them less likely to over eat or eat too little in the future.
- Your children will grow best if you do not pressure, bribe or reward them to eat more or eat certain foods. The more a parent pushes food, the less likely a child is to eat them.
- Enjoy meals without watching TV or other distractions such as toys. This allows everyone to focus on food, and helps children know when they're full so they don't over eat.



What are healthy drinks for my child?

- Offer water between meals and snacks. Water is better for preschoolers' teeth than juice, and doesn't fill them up. When it's hot or preschoolers are active, offer them water often.
- Limit juice intake to no more than 125-175 mL (4 to 6 oz.) a day. Too much juice provides too much sugar and no fibre. Encourage your child to eat fruits instead of juice to get fibre.

- Milk (or fortified soy beverage) is 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.



How do I know my child is growing well?

- Growth is affected by many things. Each child is different. Children grow and develop at different rates.
- 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.


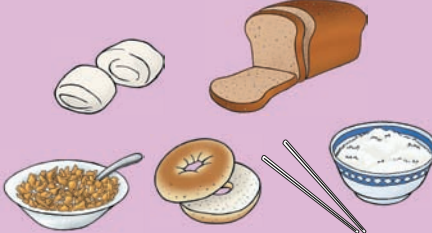
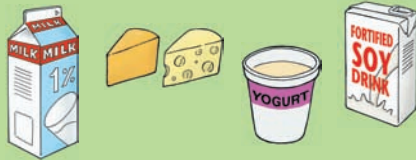


Why is being active important?

- 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.

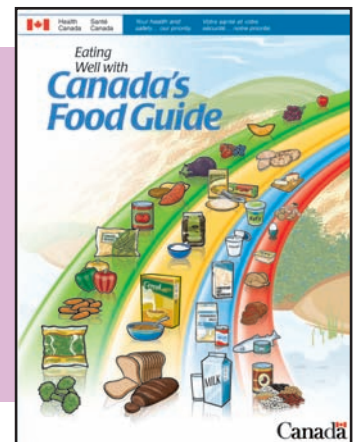


How Much Should My Child Eat?

Food Group	Age 3	Age 4 and 5	What is One Food Guide Serving?
Vegetables and Fruit Eat one dark green and one orange vegetable each day. 	4 Food Guide servings	5 Food Guide servings	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 1 medium 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 Choose whole grain products each day. 	3 Food Guide servings	4 Food Guide servings	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 1 slice of bread • 1/2 bagel • 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 • 125 mL (1/2 cup) congee
Milk and Alternatives Drink 500 mL (2 cups) of 1% or 2% milk each day. 	2 Food Guide servings	2 Food Guide servings	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 250 mL (1 cup) milk or fortified soy beverage as a drink or in puddings and soup • 175 g (3/4 cup) yogurt • 50 g (1 1/2 oz) hard cheese
Meat and Alternatives Have alternatives such as beans, lentils and tofu often. 	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, game meat or duck • 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)
- 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.

A Sample Meal Plan

Breakfast

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

Morning Snack

- 1 roll
- 125 mL (1/2 cup) 100% fruit juice

Noon Meal

- 125 mL (1/2 cup) steamed rice
- 50 g (1/4 cup) tofu
- 125 mL (1/2 cup) stir-fried vegetables
- 1 small pear

Afternoon Snack

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

Supper

- 30 g (1/4 cup) meat, fish, poultry or 125 mL (1/2 cup) legumes
- 125 mL (1/2 cup) rice
- 125 mL (1/2 cup) cooked broccoli
- 125 mL (1/2 cup) milk

After Supper Snack

- 4 whole wheat crackers
- 125 mL (1/2 cup) fortified soy beverage

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

GOOD TO KNOW:

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

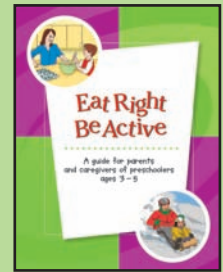
Offer water to drink between meals, when preschoolers are active, and when the weather is hot.

Want More Information?

EatRight Ontario

For more information on nutrition and healthy eating and a copy of the 'Eat Right Be Active' educational booklet, visit EatRight Ontario at: www.ontario.ca/eatright.

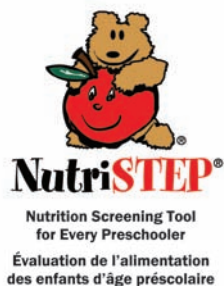
Ontario residents can speak to a registered dietitian by calling the EatRight Ontario toll-free telephone information service at **1-877-510-510-2**. Interpreters who speak Vietnamese are available.



Contacts

Contact your local public health unit or community health centre for:

- Further advice on eating problems, supplements, children and diets (e.g. vegetarian).
- Handouts on growth, healthy eating, meal and snack ideas, picky eaters, food budgeting, reading food labels and more.
- Contact information for nutrition related support groups and agencies in your community.
- Parent education workshops.



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