HOLY SPIRIT
CHILD DEVELOPMENT ACADEMY

Nutrition Packet

The Holy Spirit Child Development Academy does not prepare nor provide meals and snacks for the children in our program. Parents are required to provide lunch and snacks for their child daily. Depending on the age of your child and their eating habits, you will need to provide between 2-4 items for each snack time and 3-5 items for each lunchtime. Please send nutritious snacks and lunches. Avoid sending foods high in sugar and caffeine. Each classroom has a small fridge to keep some items cold such as milk products. We ask that all parents pack their child's lunch box with an ice pack as we do not have sufficient space to keep ALL items that need to be refrigerated in the classroom refrigerator.

If you drop off your child between 7:00 AM and 7:30 AM, you have the option of packing a breakfast for your child that he or she can eat at the Academy. Breakfast should contain between 1-3 items for each child depending on the age or the child's eating habits. Please note that if you drop off after 7:30 AM, your child should eat a healthy and nutritious breakfast at home.

All children should have their food in "containers" that can easily be opened without assistance as we encourage the children to become independent. If you are providing anything other than finger food, please provide utensils for your child, even if they are in the toddler classrooms.

Per the State of Florida Department of Children and Families, all lunchboxes and drink cups are required to be labeled with your child's first and last name.

Water Bottles and Milk

Parents are required to provide a **water bottle** for their child. Your child's water bottle will be offered to them multiple times a day and at meal times. Each classroom has filtered water to refill the children's water bottles throughout the day. Please label your child's water bottle with their first name and last initial. Water bottles will be sent home at the end of every day. If the water bottle is left at the Academy, please send in a new water bottle for your child to use and the one that was left will be sent home.

Milk cups should be clearly labeled as milk and have your child's first name and last initial visible. Please notify your child's teachers that you are bringing milk and when it should be offered (e.g. at meal times; before nap; after nap). Milk cups are optional and not required.

We do not have the capability of properly sanitizing water bottles and/or cups. Please do not ask your child's teacher to wash and reuse the same water bottle and/or cup.

Breast Milk and Infant Formula

All breast milk and infant formula must be pre-made in a bottle or twist pouch with feeding attachments. All bottles must be labeled with your child's first name, last name, and the date. To prevent any cross contamination, the Academy cannot make bottles or mix bottles using breast milk or formula. All heated breast milk or formula will be discarded one (1) hour after feeding an infant. Upon request, all breast milk that would otherwise be discarded can be stored in a bottle or container that is provided by a parent and given to the parent at pickup.

Solid foods, including cereal, may not be added to a bottle or infant feeder unless authorized by a physician due to the high risk of choking. Documentation must be provided if authorized by a physician. Additionally, any medication, including antibiotics, may not be added to a bottle. If the teachers are informed of any solid food or medication added to a bottle, the bottle will be discarded and the parent will be responsible for providing a new bottle.

Children who are in the Orange Room and Blue Room CANNOT be given breast milk in a bottle or sippy cup. Breast milk is a bodily fluid and cannot be kept in the classroom due to the risk of other children coming into contact with it, cross contamination, or accidentally being shared with another child.

Classroom Parties

At the Holy Spirit Child Development Academy, we will have class parties for holidays, special events, and for end of the school year celebrations. Depending on the type of class party, we may ask parents to provide snacks and/or drinks. A list will be posted with food or drinks that each classroom would like parents to provide for the party.

If parents would like to have a small birthday party. Please speak with your child's teacher about what you would like to provide (e.g. fruit; cupcakes; brownies; muffins; cookies). If parents plan on providing more than a small birthday treat, please give the Academy sufficient notice to notify other parents in the classroom so they can plan accordingly.

All items provided for classroom and birthday parties **MUST** be store-bought and pre-packaged. Any food made at home or not following the guidelines above will not be accepted.

Why Nutrition is Important for Children Under Five Years of Age

According to the World Health Organization, “Adequate nutrition during infancy and early childhood is essential to ensure the growth, health, and development of children to their full potential. Poor nutrition increases the risk of illness, and is responsible, directly or indirectly, for one third of the estimated 9.5 million deaths that occurred in 2006 in children less than 5 years of age. Inappropriate nutrition can also lead to childhood obesity which is an increasing public health problem in many countries.”

The HSC states in their “Nutrition Matters for the Early Years” packet the following, “What we eat can play a critical role in determining our health, whatever our age. The eating patterns established in the first few years of life influence our health during childhood and adulthood. Encouraging good nutrition during the early years of life is therefore an investment in the health of our population for years to come…Good nutrition is essential during childhood, as it is a time of rapid growth, development and activity. This is also a vital time for healthy tooth development and prevention of decay. General eating habits and patterns are formed in the first few years of life. Poor nutrition during these years is associated with an increased risk of obesity, hypertension, diabetes and coronary heart disease.”

Breakfast: Pick one to three items from the categories (If you drop off between 7:00 and 7:30)
Morning Snack: Pick two to four items from the categories
Lunch: Pick one to three items from each category
Afternoon Snack: Pick two to four items from the categories

Fruits	Vegetables	Grains	Protein	Dairy
Apple	Carrots	Brown Rice	Beef	Milk
Grapes (quartered)	Corn	Wild Rice	Chicken	Fruit Yogurt
Cherries (quartered)	Bell Pepper	White Rice	Pork or Ham	Plain Yogurt
Watermelon	Potato	Quinoa	Turkey	Yogurt Dip
Orange	Sweet Potato	Farro	Fish	
Mandarin	Peas	Oats	Shellfish	Cheese:
Kiwi	Snow Peas	Barley	Egg	Cheddar
Cantaloupe	Snap Sugar Peas	Buckwheat	Nut Butter	Swiss
Strawberries	Broccoli	Rye	Black Beans	Provolone
Blueberries	Cauliflower	Millet	Lima Beans	Mozzarella
Raspberries	Radish	Corn	Kidney Beans	American
Blackberries	Green Beans		Lentils	Gouda
Banana	Asparagus	Whole Wheat or Grain:	Chickpeas	Parmesan
Peaches	Mushrooms	Bread	Edamame	Feta
Avocado	Squash	Pasta	Non-Dairy Milk	Brie
Pear	Pumpkin	Crackers	Tofu	Camembert
Mango	Cabbage	Cereal		Muenster
Tomatoes	Eggplant	Tortilla	Give with Caution:	Ricotta
Peach	Zucchini	Muffin	Almonds	Goat Cheese
Honeydew	Brussel Sprouts	Biscuits	Cashews	Cream Cheese
Plum	Parsnips	Bagel	Peanuts	Cottage Cheese
Nectarine	Celery	Pancake	Pecans	String Cheese
Grapefruit	Okra	Waffle		
Figs	Red or Swiss Chard	Granola		
Coconut	Lettuce	Cornbread		
Cucumber; Pickles	Spinach	Pita		

The following meal plan is an example meal plan for parents to view. Please note that we are not nutritionists and this meal plan is only intended to provide parents with an idea of what items they can pack for their child. Parents **DO NOT** have to follow this meal plan.

	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday
Breakfast	Pancakes; Berries	French Toast; Banana	Waffles; Apples	Bagel with Cream Cheese; Carrots	French Toast; Kiwi
Morning Snack	Banana; Muffins; Yogurt	Hard Boiled Eggs; Avocado Slices; Cheddar Cheese	Oatmeal; Grapes; Sweet Potato	Pork Sausage; Toast with Butter; Honeydew	Scrambled Eggs with Cheese; Tomatoes; Apples
Lunch	Pizza; Broccoli and Carrots; Watermelon and Blueberries	Turkey and Cheese Sandwich; Peaches and Kiwi; Green Beans	Chicken and Rice; Zucchini; Parmesan Slices; Pears	Grilled Chicken with Roasted Potatoes, Squash, and Carrots; Watermelon;	Peanut Butter and Jelly Sandwich; Cherries; Radishes and Bell Peppers; Yogurt
Afternoon Snack	Peanut Butter and Crackers; Snap Sugar Peas; String Cheese	Cucumbers and Carrots; Hummus; Crackers	Yogurt; Mango; Celery; Muffin	Pumpkin; Turkey; Mozzarella; Quinoa	Banana, Orange Slices, and Strawberries; Sweet Potato; Cornbread

	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday
Breakfast	Waffles; Yogurt; Cherries	Peanut Butter on Toast; Banana	Breakfast Muffins; Grapes	Whole Wheat Biscuit; Cheddar Cheese; Grape Tomatoes	Whole Grain Cheerios; Strawberries; Avocado
Morning Snack	Scrambled Eggs with Bell Peppers and Spinach; Cantaloupe	Sausage Patty; Blackberries and Watermelon; Yogurt with Granola	Celery with Peanut Butter; Hard Boiled Egg; Raspberries	Chicken Sausage Links; Honeydew and Mandarin Oranges; Bagel with Cream Cheese	Egg Muffins; Yogurt with Blueberries and Granola; Cucumbers
Lunch	Grilled Chicken Strips; Steamed Broccoli and Sweet Potato; Blueberries; Cottage Cheese	Rice and Beans; Corn; Mango and Avocado	Meatloaf; Steamed Green Beans and Mushrooms; Mozzarella Slices	Leftovers from Dinner; Banana and Kiwi; Cucumbers with Yogurt Dip	Spaghetti Squash with Ground Beef, Peas, and Carrots; Bread; Watermelon
Afternoon Snack	Carrots, Snap Sugar Peas, and Broccoli with Ranch; Muffin	Swiss Cheese Slices; Steamed Cauliflower and Carrots; Crackers	Oatmeal Bar; Radishes; Peaches; Yogurt	Fruit Salad with Apple, Strawberries, Blueberries, Banana, Grapes and Oranges; Cheese and Crackers	Turkey and Cheese Pinwheels; Grapes; Carrot Sticks

The following information is from *Meal and Snack Ideas for Your 1 to 3 Year Old Child* by British Columbia HealthLink BCM:

How do I help my young child eat safely?

Children under the age of 4 are at higher risk of choking than older children and adults. They have small airways and less control over swallowing. Always stay with your child while they eat and drink. Avoid feeding your child in a moving vehicle or in a stroller.

To prevent choking:

- Watch your child and make sure they sit down to eat or drink
- Encourage them to take small bites and to chew the food well
- Cook or grate hard vegetables like carrots
- Chop soft fruit into small pieces. Remove pits, seeds and tough skins before serving
- Remove any bones from fish and flake before serving. You can rub fish between your fingers to find and remove bones
- Cut round foods like grapes, cherry tomatoes and hot dogs lengthwise first and then into pieces
- Spread smooth peanut butter thinly on toast or crackers or stir into warm cooked cereal
- Do not feed your child foods with toothpicks or skewers

Do not give your child:

- Whole peanuts, nuts, seeds or popcorn
- Whole grapes
- Fish with bones
- Dried fruit such as raisins
- Hard candy or cough drops
- Gum or marshmallows
- Peanut butter, nut or seed butters on a spoon

How do I prepare food safely?

Young children are at increased risk of food-borne illness. Bacteria such as E. coli, Salmonella and Listeria are killed when foods are heated to safe cooking temperatures. To avoid food-borne illness, do not offer your child:

- Raw or undercooked meat, fish or poultry. Make sure that meat, fish and poultry are cooked to safe internal temperatures
- Raw or lightly cooked eggs. These may be in homemade mayonnaise, sauces and dressings or homemade ice cream
- Unpasteurized milk or dairy products or unpasteurized juice
- Raw sprouts, such as alfalfa, clover, radish and mung beans. Only offer thoroughly cooked sprouts.

What if my child has food allergies?

If you have questions or concerns about food allergies, talk to your child's doctor, pediatrician, a registered dietitian or a public health nurse.

Additional Resources

USDA / My Plate

Infants (https://www.myplate.gov/life-stages/infants)

Toddlers (https://www.myplate.gov/life-stages/toddlers)

Preschoolers (https://www.myplate.gov/life-stages/preschoolers)

Healthy Eating for Families (https://myplate-prod.azureedge.us/sites/default/files/2022-04/TipSheet_22_HealthyEatingForFamilies.pdf)

Phrases that Help and Hinder (https://myplate-prod.azureedge.us/sites/default/files/2020-12/PhrasesThatHelpAndHinder.pdf

Healthy Tips for Picky Eaters (https://myplate-prod.azureedge.us/sites/default/files/2020-12/HealthyTipsforPickyEaters_031418_508.pdf)

Kitchen Helper Activities (https://myplate-prod.azureedge.us/sites/default/files/2020-12/KitchenHelperActivities%202-5%20yo.pdf)

CDC

Infant and Toddler Nutrition (https://www.cdc.gov/nutrition/InfantandToddlerNutrition/index.html)

American Academy of Pediatrics

Feeding & Nutrition Tips: Your 1-Year-Old (https://www.healthychildren.org/English/ages-stages/toddler/nutrition/Pages/Feeding-and-Nutrition-Your-One-Year-Old.aspx)

Feeding & Nutrition Tips: Your 2-Year-Old (https://www.healthychildren.org/English/ages-stages/toddler/nutrition/Pages/Feeding-and-Nutrition-Your-Two-Year-Old.aspx)

Feeding & Nutrition Tips: Your 3-Year-Old (https://www.healthychildren.org/English/ages-stages/toddler/nutrition/Pages/Feeding-and-Nutrition-Your-Three-Year-Old.aspx)

FDA
Infant Formula: Safety Do's and Don'ts
(https://www.fda.gov/consumers/consumer-updates/infant-formula-safety-dos-and-donts)

FoodSafety.gov
People at Risk: Children Under Five
(https://www.foodsafety.gov/people-at-risk/children-under-five)

HSC Public Health Agency
Nutrition Matters for the Early Years
(https://www.publichealth.hscni.net/sites/default/files/Nutrition%20Matters%20for%20the%20early%20years%200118.pdf)

Vegetarian Nutrition
Vegetarian Nutrition for Toddlers and Preschoolers
https://higherlogicdownload.s3.amazonaws.com/THEACADEMY/859dd171-3982-43db-8535-56c4fdc42b51/UploadedImages/VN/Documents/Toddlers-Preschoolers-Vegetarian-Nutrition.pdf

References

Infant and Young Child Feeding: Model Chapter for Textbooks for Medical Students and Allied Health Professionals. Geneva: World Health Organization; 2009. SESSION 1, The importance of infant and young child feeding and recommended practices.

Available from: https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/books/NBK148967/

Nutrition Matters for the Early Years; Public Health Agency HSCNI. www.publichealth.hscni.net/sites/default/files/Nutrition%20Matters%20for%20the%20early%20years%200118.pdf.

USDA
United States Department of Agriculture

Food and Nutrition Service

Reducing the Risk of Choking in Young Children at Mealtimes

Children **under the age of 4** are at a high risk of choking while eating. Young children are still learning how to chew food properly, and they often swallow the food whole. Their small airways can become easily blocked.

You can help reduce children's risk of choking when eating by preparing food in certain ways, such as cutting food into small pieces and cooking hard food, like carrots, until it is soft enough to pierce with a fork. **Remember, always supervise children during meals and snacks.**

FNS-877 September 2020
USDA is an equal opportunity provider, employer, and lender.

Prepare Foods So They Are Easy to Chew

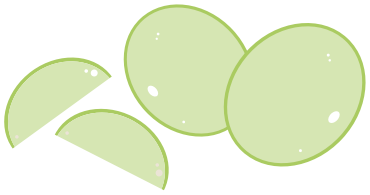
You can make eating safer for young children by following the tips below:

- Cook or steam hard food, like carrots, until it is soft enough to pierce with a fork.
- Remove seeds, pits, and tough skins/peels from fruits and vegetables.
- Finely chop foods into thin slices, strips, or small pieces (no larger than ½ inch), or grate, mash, or puree foods. This is especially important when serving raw fruits and vegetables, as those items may be harder to chew.
- Remove all bones from fish, chicken, and meat before cooking or serving.
- Grind up tough meats and poultry.

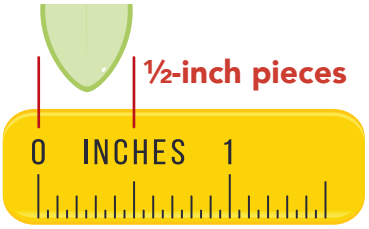
Cut Round Foods Into Smaller Pieces

Small round foods such as grapes, cherries, cherry tomatoes, and melon balls are common causes of choking.

Slice these items in half lengthwise.



Then slice into smaller pieces **(no larger than ½ inch)** when serving them to young children.



Avoid Choking Hazards

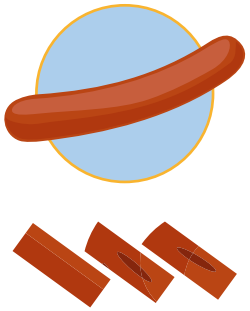
To help prevent choking, do not serve small (marble-sized), sticky, or hard foods that are difficult to chew and easy to swallow whole, including:

- Cheese cubes or blocks. Grate or thinly slice cheese before serving.
- Chewing gum*
- Dried fruit
- Gummy fruit snacks*
- Hard candy, including caramels, cough drops, jelly beans, lollipops, etc.*
- Hard pretzels and pretzel chips
- Ice cubes*
- Marshmallows*
- Nuts and seeds, including breads, crackers, and cereals that contain nuts and seeds
- Popcorn
- Spoonfuls of peanut butter or other nut butters. Spread nut butters thinly on other foods (e.g., toast, crackers, etc.). Serve only creamy, not chunky, nut butters.
- Whole round or tube-shaped foods such as grapes, cherry tomatoes, cherries, raw carrots, sausages, and hot dogs

*Not creditable in the Child Nutrition Programs, including the Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP), National School Lunch Program and School Breakfast Program, and Summer Food Service Program.

Cut Tube-shaped Foods Into Smaller Pieces

Cut tube-shaped foods, such as baby carrots, string cheese, hot dogs, etc., into short strips rather than round pieces.

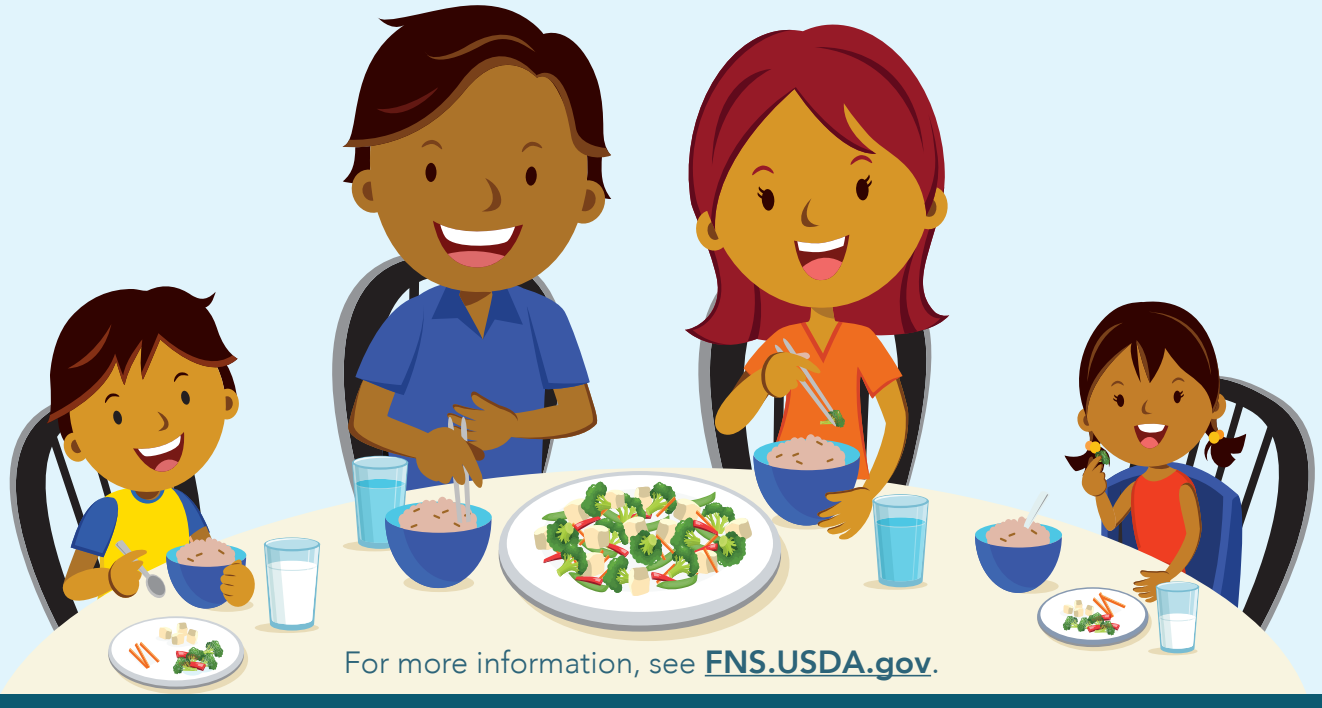


In addition to the foods listed, **avoid serving foods that are as wide around as a nickel**, which is about the size of a young child's throat.

Teach Good Eating Habits

Sit and eat with children at meals and snacks. Remind children to take small bites of food and swallow between bites. Eating together may help you quickly spot a child who might be choking. Other tips to help prevent choking while eating include:

- Only providing foods as part of meals and snacks served at a dining table or high chair. When serving infants, do not prop the bottle up on a pillow or other item for the baby to feed him or herself.
- Allowing plenty of time for meals and snacks.
- Making sure children are sitting upright while eating.
- Reminding children to swallow their food before talking or laughing.
- Modeling safe behavior for children to follow, including eating slowly, taking small bites, and chewing food completely before swallowing.
- Encouraging older children to serve as role models for younger children as well. All children should avoid playing games with food, as that may lead to an increased risk of choking.



For more information, see FNS.USDA.gov.

Try It Out!

How can you prepare and serve the following foods to reduce the risk of choking?

1 Whole baby carrots

2 Whole grapes

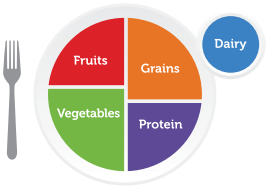
3 Peanut butter

4 Block of cheddar cheese

Answer Key

1. Cut carrots lengthwise into thin strips (not circles). You could also cook carrots until soft, or cut into small pieces no larger than ½ inch.
2. Cut grapes in half lengthwise, then cut into smaller pieces no larger than ½ inch.
3. Spread peanut butter thinly on small pieces of toast, crackers, etc. Do not serve spoonfuls of peanut butter.
4. Grate or thinly slice the cheese. Do not serve cheese cubes.

Start simple with MyPlate



Healthy Eating for Infants

Healthy eating is important at every age. When it's time for solid foods, offer babies a variety of fruits, vegetables, grains, protein foods, and dairy or fortified soy alternatives. When deciding on foods and beverages, choose options that are full of nutrients and lower in sodium and avoid added sugars. Start with these tips:

Feeding your young baby

If possible, feed your baby only breast milk from birth to about 6 months of age, and continue through at least the first year of life—longer if desired. If breast milk is unavailable, feed your baby iron-fortified infant formula. Talk to your healthcare provider about vitamin D supplements for your baby.

Look for cues

When babies are hungry, they usually let you know. But fullness cues are not as obvious. Babies may be full if they close their mouth, turn their head away from breast or bottle, or relax their hands. Recognizing and responding to these cues helps children learn how to self-regulate their intake.

Starting solid foods

At about 6 months, infants may show signs that they're ready for solid foods, such as bringing objects to the mouth or swallowing food rather than pushing it out. Do not put infant cereal or other solid foods in an infant's bottle, but small amounts of water may also be introduced when your baby starts solid foods.

Serving first foods

Introduce a variety of foods, flavors, and textures from all food groups. Include foods rich in iron and zinc, particularly for breastfed infants. Examples include lean meats, fortified infant cereals, and beans.

Prevent choking

Make sure your baby is sitting in a highchair or other safe, supervised place for meals and snacks. Offer foods that are the appropriate size, consistency, and shape for your child's age and eating skills.

Serving safe foods

Avoid feeding your baby any foods that contain raw or cooked honey. Honey can contain bacteria that could cause serious illness or death among infants. Also avoid unpasteurized foods or beverages, such as juices, milk, yogurt, or cheeses, as they could contain harmful bacteria.

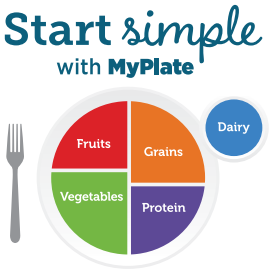
DGA Dietary Guidelines for Americans

Go to **MyPlate**.gov for more information.

USDA is an equal opportunity provider, employer, and lender.

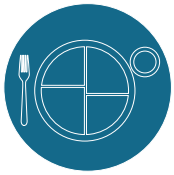
The benefits of healthy eating add up over time, bite by bite.

FNS-905-14
March 2022



Healthy Eating for Toddlers

Healthy eating is important at every age. Offer toddlers a variety of fruits, vegetables, grains, protein foods, and dairy or fortified soy alternatives. When deciding on foods and beverages, choose options that are full of nutrients and lower in sodium and avoid added sugars. Start with these tips:



Provide foods full of nutrients

Offer your toddler a variety of fruits, vegetables, grains, protein foods, and dairy or fortified soy alternatives. Avoid foods and beverages with added sugars and choose those with lower sodium.

Look for cues

When children are hungry, they usually let you know. But fullness cues are not as obvious. Children may be full if they push food away, close mouth, turn head away from food, or make sounds to let you know. Recognizing and responding to these cues helps children learn how to self-regulate their intake.

Prevent choking

Have toddlers sit at a table for meals and snacks and not wander around with food in their mouth. Foods such as hot dogs, candy, nuts and seeds, raw carrots, grapes, popcorn, and chunks of peanut butter can be choking risks. See the USDA Team Nutrition worksheet for more.

Drinks matter too!

Did you know the only beverages your toddler needs are water, milk, and, if available, breast milk? Avoid drinks with added sugars like soda, flavored milks, juice drinks, and sports drinks.

Try new foods

Try serving a new food alongside a familiar food in the same meal. It may take up to 8 to 10 tries for a child to accept a new food.

Serve safe food

Help your child learn to wash their hands before eating. Only serve foods that have been cooked properly and avoid serving your toddler unpasteurized (raw) juice or milk.

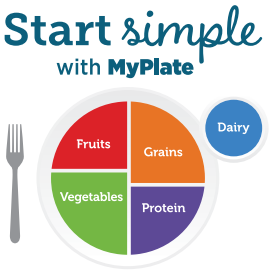
DGA Dietary Guidelines for Americans

Go to MyPlate.gov for more information.

USDA is an equal opportunity provider, employer, and lender.

The benefits of healthy eating add up over time, bite by bite.

FNS-905-15
March 2022



Healthy Eating for Preschoolers

Healthy eating is important at every age. Offer preschoolers a variety of fruits, vegetables, grains, protein foods, and dairy or fortified soy alternatives. When deciding on foods and beverages, choose options that are full of nutrients and limited in added sugars, saturated fat, and sodium. Start with these tips:

Model healthy behaviors

Preschoolers tend to copy what parents or caregivers do at the table. If you eat your veggies, they'll eat their veggies. And, it's good for both of you.

Think about their drinks

Sugar-sweetened beverages like sodas and fruit drinks are sources of added sugars that are often high in calories. Beverages with no added sugars like water, unsweetened fat-free or low-fat milk (including low-lactose or lactose-free options), or fortified soy beverages should be the primary choice for children.

Prevent choking

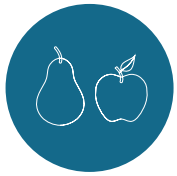
Encourage children to sit at a table for meals and snacks and not wander around carrying food. Check out the USDA Team Nutrition worksheet for foods that are choking hazards at different ages.

Try new foods

Let children choose a new food to try at the grocery store. Serve something your child likes along with the new food. It may take up to a dozen tries for a child to accept a new food.

Get kids involved

Preschoolers can help at mealtimes by washing produce, tearing lettuce, stirring mixes, scooping ingredients, or setting the table.



Offer choices

Like adults, preschoolers like to have a say in what they eat. "A pear or an apple?" "Whole-wheat toast or some crackers?" You offer the healthy options, but they get to choose.

DGA Dietary Guidelines for Americans

Go to **MyPlate**.gov for more information.
USDA is an equal opportunity provider, employer, and lender.

The benefits of healthy eating add up over time, bite by bite.

FNS-905-16
March 2022

Build a Healthy Eating Routine for Your Baby (Birth to Age 2)

The first 2 years of your child's life are a very important time for their growth and development. By giving your baby the nutrition they need, you'll help them grow and thrive.

Follow these tips to build a healthy eating routine for your baby.

Give your baby a healthy start with breast milk

Breast milk is the best source of nutrition for your child's first months of life. For about the first 6 months, **give your baby only breast milk** — no other drinks or solid foods. Keep giving your baby breast milk until at least age 12 months, and as long as you want after that.

If you're not breastfeeding, give them **fortified infant formula** (formula with added iron). Make sure to only use store-bought infant formula. Don't give your baby homemade formula or toddler formula. Learn more about choosing infant formula at **cdc.gov/nutrition/InfantandToddlerNutrition/formula-feeding/choosing-an-infant-formula.html**.

At first, babies may need to eat every 1 to 3 hours. Learn more about breastfeeding — including how much and how often to breastfeed your baby over time — at **cdc.gov/Nutrition/InfantAndToddlerNutrition/Breastfeeding**.

What about supplements?

If you're giving your baby only breast milk or a mix of breast milk and infant formula, start giving them a **daily vitamin D supplement** soon after birth. Choose a supplement with 10 mcg (400 IU) of vitamin D. Some breastfed babies may also need an iron supplement before age 6 months. Ask your baby's doctor what supplements they need.

If you're giving your baby only formula, they don't need extra vitamin D or iron because these are added to infant formula.

Offer a healthy mix of solid foods

Give your baby a variety of healthy choices from each food group when they're ready to start eating solid foods:

Fruits — like bananas, strawberries, pears, and melons

Veggies — like avocados and cooked spinach, carrots, peas, black beans, edamame, sweet potatoes, and beets

Whole grains — like whole-grain bread, crackers, oatmeal, or pasta

Protein foods — like peanut butter or soft, small pieces of beef, chicken, turkey, and fish

Dairy — like pasteurized yogurt, cheese, and fortified soy yogurt

Make sure to include foods with **iron** and **zinc** — like meat, beans, some seafood, and fortified infant cereals. Iron and zinc are important for your baby's growth and brain development.

While you're introducing foods, keep giving your baby breast milk or infant formula. If you're using infant formula, stop giving formula at age 12 months.

How can I tell when my baby is ready for solid foods?

Most babies are ready to start eating solid foods around age 6 months. You'll know your baby is ready when they start to:

- Sit up and hold their head up
- Try to grab objects and bring them up to their mouth
- Swallow food instead of pushing it out of their mouth

If you're not sure whether your baby is ready for solid foods, check with your child's doctor. Don't start solid foods before age 4 months.

What about foods that cause allergies?

Some children develop allergies to certain foods like nuts, eggs, shellfish, or wheat. But there's no need to delay introducing these foods — giving your baby these foods won't cause a food allergy. In fact, introducing foods with peanuts (like peanut butter) before age 12 months can lower your baby's risk of developing a peanut allergy.

And if your baby is at high risk for a peanut allergy, you may need to introduce foods with peanuts at 4 to 6 months to lower their risk. Babies are at high risk for a peanut allergy if they have an egg allergy or they have eczema (a type of itchy skin rash).

Ask your child's doctor about their risk for peanut allergy and safe ways to introduce peanuts.

Avoid these foods

Honey and **raw (unpasteurized)** versions of milk, yogurt, cheese, and juice may carry bacteria that can make babies very sick.

Never give your baby honey. Look for the word "pasteurized" on the labels of milk, yogurt, cheese, and juices — these foods are safe to feed your baby.

Added sugars include sugars that are added to foods and drinks, foods packaged as sweeteners (such as table sugar), and sugars from syrups and honey. Don't give your baby sugary drinks like flavored milk or fruit punch or sweet treats like cookies. Instead, give your baby water to drink and fruit to eat.

Foods high in **sodium (salt)** include packaged foods like processed meats and salty snacks. Give your baby more fresh foods or low-sodium frozen, canned, and jarred options.

Watch out for choking risks

At first, it's easier for babies to eat very soft foods — like foods that are mashed, pureed, or strained. As your baby develops, try introducing thicker and lumpier foods.

Avoid foods that babies are likely to choke on, like:

- Hot dogs
- Raw carrots
- Grapes
- Nuts and seeds
- Popcorn

Spoonfuls of peanut butter can also cause choking — try spreading a thin layer of creamy peanut butter on crackers or toast instead.

Choose healthy drinks for your child

When you're introducing solid foods, you can also start giving your baby small amounts of **water** (up to 4 to 8 ounces a day).

Wait until age 12 months to give your baby cow's milk, fortified soy beverages (soy milk), or fruit juice. After 12 months, you can introduce plain whole milk or unsweetened fortified soy milk. If you decide to introduce juice, choose 100% juice and limit it to 4 ounces or less per day. Just remember that your child doesn't need fruit juice to be healthy — it's better to eat whole fruit than to drink fruit juice.

Avoid these drinks

It is best not to give your child drinks with caffeine or added sugars, like:

- Soda
- Sports drinks or energy drinks
- Fruit drinks (like fruit punch)
- Flavored milks

Help your child learn to enjoy healthy foods

As your child grows, continue to introduce new foods from all the food groups. Children start developing taste preferences before age 2 — so giving them a variety of foods now can help them choose healthy foods later in life.

If your child doesn't like a new food right away, don't give up! It can take up to 10 tries for children to get used to a new food.

Try these healthy swaps

Healthy eating doesn't have to be hard. Try these easy swaps to introduce your child to healthier foods:

- Instead of fruit bars, try sliced apples
- Instead of hot dogs, try ground lean meats
- Instead of cereal with added sugars, try unsweetened cereal

How can I tell if my child is hungry or full?

Learn to notice signs that your baby is hungry or full — that way, you can let them take the lead at mealtimes. For example:

- When your child is hungry, they may open their mouth or reach for food
- When your child is full, they may close their mouth or push food away

Learn more signs and other mealtime tips at **cdc.gov/Nutrition/InfantAndToddlerNutrition/Mealtime**.

Make every bite count

Remember that in the first 2 years of life, your baby only eats very small amounts of food. So make every bite a healthy bite!

- Learn about the Dietary Guidelines for Americans and get more resources to help you and your family eat healthy at **DietaryGuidelines.gov**
- Find healthy eating tips and recipes at **MyPlate.gov**
- If you need help providing healthy food for your baby, check out programs that can help at **USA.gov/Food-Help**

Phrases that *HELP* and *HINDER*

As the caregiver, you play the biggest role in your child's eating behavior.
What you say has an impact on developing healthy eating habits.
Negative phrases can easily be changed into positive, helpful ones!

ChooseMyPlate.gov

Phrases that *HINDER*

INSTEAD OF ...

Eat that for me.
If you do not eat one more bite, I will be mad.

Phrases like these teach your child to eat for your approval and love. This can lead your child to have unhealthy behaviors, attitudes, and beliefs about food and about themselves.

INSTEAD OF ...

You're such a big girl; you finished all your peas.
Jenny, look at your sister. She ate all of her bananas.
You have to take one more bite before you leave the table.

Phrases like these teach your child to ignore fullness. It is better for kids to stop eating when full or satisfied than when all of the food has been eaten.

INSTEAD OF ...

See, that didn't taste so bad, did it?

This implies to your child that he or she was wrong to refuse the food. This can lead to unhealthy attitudes about food or self.

INSTEAD OF ...

No dessert until you eat your vegetables.
Stop crying and I will give you a cookie.

Offering some foods, like dessert, in reward for finishing others, like vegetables, makes some foods seem better than others. Getting a food treat when upset teaches your child to eat to feel better. This can lead to overeating.

Phrases that *HELP*

TRY ...

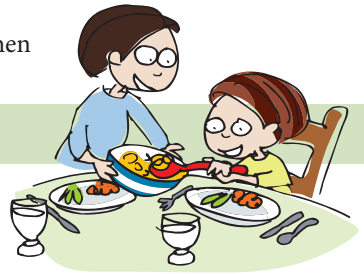
This is kiwi fruit; it's sweet like a strawberry.
These radishes are very crunchy!

Phrases like these help to point out the sensory qualities of food. They encourage your child to try new foods.

TRY ...

Is your stomach telling you that you're full?
Is your stomach still making its hungry growling noise?
Has your tummy had enough?

Phrases like these help your child to recognize when he or she is full. This can prevent overeating.



TRY ...

Do you like that?
Which one is your favorite?
Everybody likes different foods, don't they?

Phrases like these make your child feel like he or she is making the choices. It also shifts the focus toward the taste of food rather than who was right.

TRY ...

We can try these vegetables again another time. Next time would you like to try them raw instead of cooked?
I am sorry you are sad. Come here and let me give you a big hug.

Reward your child with attention and kind words. Comfort him or her with hugs and talks. Show love by spending time and having fun together.

Adapted from "What You Say Really Matters?" in *Feeding Young Children in Group Settings*, Dr. Janice Fletcher and Dr. Laurel Branen, University of Idaho.

Vegetarian Nutrition

a dietetic practice group of the Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics

RDN Resources for Consumers:

Vegetarian Nutrition for Toddlers and Preschoolers

A well-balanced vegetarian diet supports healthy growth and development of toddlers and preschoolers.

Good Sources of Key Nutrients

These early years are key in the establishment of healthy eating habits that will last a lifetime. Vegetarian and vegan diets can provide all the nutrients needed by children at each stage of growth. A registered dietitian can help parents plan healthy meals and create positive eating habits for the whole family.

Energy Needs and Growth

At age one, weight gain slows and children often begin to eat less. Eating too many high fiber foods may cause children to feel full before they have eaten enough calories. A well-balanced vegetarian diet is often high in fiber, which can be found in fruits, vegetables, and whole-grains. Incorporating some refined grain products, 100% fruit juices, and peeled fruits and vegetables into a child's diet can help reduce fiber and increase caloric intake if needed.

To increase calories, include high nutrient, high calorie foods such as:

- Avocado
- Nuts/seeds and nut butters
- Dried fruits
- Vegetable oils
- Full-fat soy and dairy products
- Bean spreads (hummus)

Good Sources of Key Nutrients

Protein

- Grains
- Legumes (e.g. beans, lentils)
- Tofu, tempeh, edamame
- Plant-based meat analogues
- Nuts and nut butters
- Seeds and seed butters
- Dairy products
- Soymilk
- Eggs

Calcium

Tip: Calcium supplementation may be used to compensate for inadequate dietary intake.

- Fortified, unsweetened plant-based milk (e.g. soy, almond, hemp, cashew, pea, oat, rice, coconut)
- Fortified 100% orange juice
- Milk, yogurt, and cheese
- Green leafy vegetables (e.g. broccoli, kale, bok choy)
- Calcium-set tofu
- Almonds and almond butter
- Tahini
- Dried fruit (e.g. raisins, apricots, figs)

Iron

*Iron deficiency anemia is the most common childhood nutritional problem.

- Whole or enriched grains
- Dried fruits
- Fortified cereals
- Beans and legumes
- Green leafy vegetables

Tip: Include a source of vitamin C with meals to increase iron absorption.

Vitamin B12

- Fortified soymilk
- Some meat analogs
- Vitamin B12-fortified nutritional yeast
- Fortified ready-to-eat cereals
- Eggs
- Dairy products

Zinc

Tip: Citric acid intake may aid in zinc absorption.

- Whole-grain products
- Wheat germ
- Fortified cereals
- Tofu
- Nuts
- Beans
- Hard cheese
- Yeast leavened bread
- Fermented soy products (e.g. tempeh, miso)

Vitamin D

- Vitamin D fortified foods (e.g. cow's milk, soymilk or rice milk, orange juice, ready-to-eat cereals)
- Eggs
- Skin exposure to sunlight

Omega 3 Fatty Acids

Tip: An algae-derived omega 3 supplement may be used.

- Ground flax seeds
- Chia and hemp seeds
- Walnuts
- Canola, hemp, walnut, and flax oil

Iodine

*Processed foods and sea salt are not good sources of iodine.

- Iodized salt
- Sea vegetables (e.g. dulse, kelp)

Meal Planning Guidelines

Use these guidelines to create a well-balanced vegetarian diet. Guidelines show the minimum daily amounts for toddlers and preschoolers who typically require 1,000 to 1,400 calories per day. Children who need more calories for growth and activity should eat extra servings.

** Based on the MyPlate recommendations for 2-3 year old children.*

Food Group	Amount per day*	Example of Total Daily Amounts
Grains	3-5 oz	2 slices whole grain bread, 1 oz ready-to-eat cereal, ½ cup cooked quinoa
Vegetables	1-1.5 cups	½ cup mashed sweet potatoes, ½ cup tomato sauce, ½ cup sliced bell pepper
Fruits	1-1.5 cups	¼ cup applesauce, ½ cup blueberries, ½ cup apple slices
Protein	2-4 oz	1 oz canned beans, 1 oz tofu, 2 Tbsp almond butter
Milk	2-2.5 cups	1½ cups fortified soy milk, ½ cup yogurt, ¼ cup cheese

Choking Risks

Toddlers and preschoolers are at an increased risk of choking because of immature chewing and swallowing skills, fewer teeth, and unwillingness to take the time to carefully chew food. To minimize choking risk, the following foods should be avoided by toddlers or eaten by preschoolers only with supervision:

- Nuts, except when finely ground
- Nut butters by the spoonful
- Vegetarian hot dogs, unless sliced lengthwise and then crosswise
- Cherry tomatoes, unless halved or quartered
- Grapes, unless cut in half. Peeling may be needed for young toddlers.
- Raw cherries, unless pitted and sliced
- Raw celery and whole raw carrots
- Popcorn

Tips for Creating Healthy Eating Habits

- Offer a variety of foods, repeatedly. Children's likes and dislikes often change. It can take several introductions of a new food before kids try it or decide whether they like it.
- Make food fun by cutting it into shapes, adding color with fruits and vegetables, or serving finger foods.
- Set a good example. Let children see you eating healthy foods. Refrain from making negative comments about healthy foods you may dislike.
- Add vegetables, tofu, beans, or fruit to bulk up or change favorite recipes.
- Incorporate fruits, vegetables, and nuts into smoothies and baked goods like muffins, breads, or pancakes.
- Include children in meal planning, grocery shopping, cooking, and mealtime activities.
- Allow preschoolers to choose the portion of food that they want to eat through family-style serving.
- Do not force a child to eat or use food as a reward.
- Limit fruit juice to 4 to 6 ounces/day and choose 100% juices.

Resources

Feeding Vegan Kids by Reed Mangels, PhD, RD. https://www.vrg.org/nutshell/kids.php, 2009.

MyPlate Plan for Preschoolers by USDA. https://www.choosemyplate.gov/myplate-plan-preschoolers. Updated April 27, 2018. Accessed April 30, 2018.

Raising Vegetarian Children by Joanne Stepaniak, MSEd. and Vesanto Melina, MS, RD. Contemporary Books, 2003.

Vegan Lunch Box by Jennifer McCann. Da Capo Press, 2008.

Vegetarian Nutrition
a dietetic practice group of the Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics
eat right.

RDN Resources are a project of the Vegetarian Nutrition Dietetic Practice Group. More topics available at **www.VegetarianNutrition.net**. Professional resources also available for members at **www.VNDPG.org**.

A registered dietitian nutritionist can help you develop a healthy vegetarian eating plan that meets your needs. To find an RDN in your area, visit https://vegetariannutrition.net/find-a-registered-dietitian/

© 2018 by VN DPG.

Written by: Christine Creighton, MS, RD and updated by Lauren Panoff, MPH, RD Expires May 2023