

How to Feed Your Preschooler^(TG)



- Preschoolers want to get better at eating.
- Pressure to try new food doesn't help.
- Preschoolers can behave well at the table.

What your preschooler is like

Your preschooler is *out to please you*. She thinks you're great, that you know all the answers. She gets ideas about eating from day care, friends, and TV. She wants to pick out snacks at the grocery store. But what *you* say about food selection is all-important.

Your preschooler *pays attention to what you do*. She imitates you. When she sees you eating green beans, she figures that she'll get so she eats green beans, too.

Your preschooler *sticks to business*. She wants to learn and grow up in all areas of her life—including eating. When she's hungry, she pays attention to her eating. When she gets full, she loses interest in food.

Becoming a good eater

Eating, like everything else in your child's life, is a skill that she learns a little at a time. She's better now at chewing and swallowing. She manages a fork and spoon pretty well, using her fingers to push peas onto the spoon or to pick up pieces of meat. She's neater, too, and drinks from a cup without spilling much, although she doesn't have the fine muscle control to cut meat or eat spaghetti neatly.

Who's in charge?

Continue to follow the division of responsibility in feeding: You are responsible for *what* your child is offered to eat, and *when* and *where* the food is offered. You keep control of the menu and schedule meals and snacks. She is responsible for *how much* she eats.

As before, make sure that you put a variety of food on the table. That way, your child is more likely to eat *something*. Don't short order cook when she demands something different than what's already on the table, because that gives *her* control of the menu. And don't let her panhandle for food in between times.

By now, your child should be able to come to the

table hungry and pick and choose from what's available. She should be able to eat enough to be satisfied until snack time. If she's not doing that, you have some work to do.

Don't pressure your child to eat

Your preschooler won't be as afraid to try new foods as she was during the toddler years. And she'll no longer assume that if the taste is different, it's bad.

But don't force your child to try new foods. It's awful for children to swallow foods they *don't* like. Preschoolers also like foods less when they're given rewards for eating them. Perhaps they think, "If they have to give me something to make me eat this, it must not be so good."

Keep amounts child-sized

Your preschooler may eat very little, but don't worry. She can get the nutrients she needs from a helping only one-third to one-half the size of an adult's. If your child is growing well, she's eating the amount that's right for her.

Don't make your child clean her plate. Even adults have a hard time knowing how much they're hungry for. Teach your child to start out with a small amount, then take more if she's still hungry. But, at times her eyes *will* be bigger than her stomach and she'll waste food.

Food Waste

When your child is just learning to like new foods, you will have more food waste. She'll take food on her plate and eat just a bit, or not eat it at all. Or she won't be very good at knowing ahead of time how much she will eat, and she'll serve herself too much. You can remind her, gently, not to take so much, but you shouldn't make her clean up her plate.

In the long run, your child will waste less food if you don't get pushy. She'll learn to like more foods, and she'll take responsibility for her own eating.

Make family meals pleasant

It's important to include your preschooler in family meals. Turn off the television and make meals nice

times. Do your best to not pressure her to eat. She wants to grow up and be just like you, so she'll eat what you eat.

Social skills

Preschoolers are learning to eat with other people.

Preschoolers can:

- Stay calm when they're hungry and must wait for food.
- Help themselves when the serving dishes are passed.
- Pass food around the table.
- Say "Yes, please" or "No, thank you."
- Make do with less-favorite foods.
- Talk nicely while they eat.
- Sit at the table until they're finished.
- Eat in strange places with strange people.

Mealtime behavior

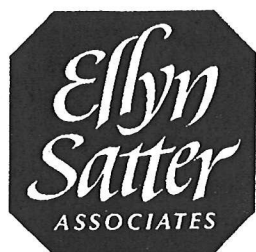
If you let your child be naughty at meals, she won't learn how to eat with others. She needs to learn to do her part to make meals pleasant for everybody.

When she doesn't behave at the table, say, "I'm sorry, but you'll have to leave. You're spoiling my dinner." Make her wait to eat again until it's time for snack.

Don't let your child whine or complain about the food, beg for food that is not on the table, or eat in disgusting ways.

Preschoolers in the kitchen

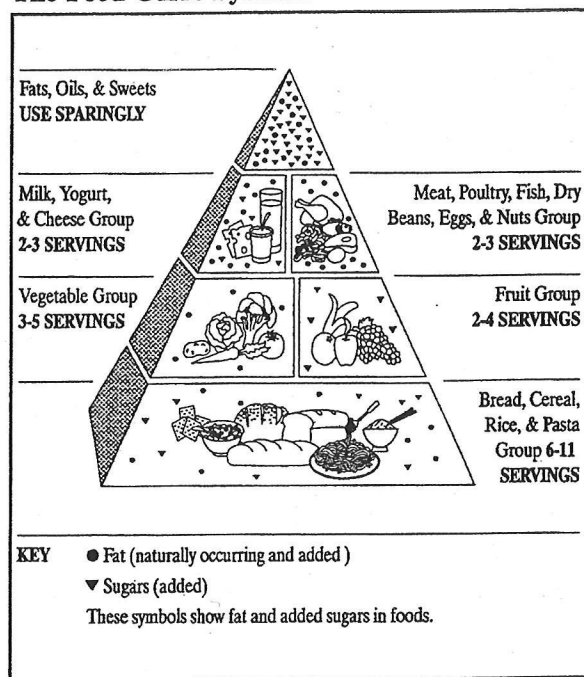
At this age, your child may enjoy growing a garden, reading and talking about food, helping you cook. Learning more about food makes it easier for her to like it. However, don't do these things to get your child to eat. You'll take the fun out of it, and your efforts will backfire.



The Food Guide Pyramid^(TG)



The Food Guide Pyramid



The *Food Guide Pyramid* shows what a good diet is like. Why the pyramid shape? Because we should eat plenty of fruits, vegetables, and grains, but not as many foods that are high in fat and sugar.

Children have their own ways of eating

The *Food Guide Pyramid* helps adults plan their meals. You can also use it as a guide for feeding your child. Just keep in mind that children have different ways of eating than adults.

Adults eat food even if it doesn't taste the best, because it's good for them and because they paid for it. Children eat what tastes good. And what tastes good to them today might not taste good tomorrow.

Adults usually eat some of everything that is put before them. Children eat only one or two foods. They ignore everything else.

It doesn't work to try to get children to eat like adults. When children are forced to eat, they lose interest in food and eat poorly.

Serve well-balanced meals and snacks and let your child choose

If you offer a variety of healthy meals and snacks, your child will eat what she needs. Plan your menus according to the *Food Guide Pyramid*. Then let your child pick and choose from what's available.

Bread, cereal, rice & pasta: Always put bread on the table, and let your child eat as much of it as she wants. Include another food from this group as well (rice or spaghetti, for example). Children generally like these "starchy" foods and have no trouble eating enough of them.

Fruits & vegetables: Fruits and vegetables are on separate lists, but they give many of the same nutrients. Sometimes children eat fruits, sometimes they eat vegetables, and there is no predicting which it will be! Try to offer a fruit and vegetable, two fruits, or two vegetables at mealtime. Offer fruit and vegetable juices at snack time.

Meat, poultry, fish, dry beans, eggs & nuts: Offer a piece of meat, or put meat in casseroles, stews, or soups. Red meat has a lot of iron and zinc. Choose lean cuts to hold down on fat. Eggs, nuts, and cooked dried beans give protein, too.

Milk, yogurt & cheese: Offer milk at mealtime. At snack time, offer milk or juice. Use whole or 2% milk. You may also use 1% or skim milk after age two *if your child likes it*. If you use low-fat milk, you should offer other food with fat in it.

Fats, oils & sweets: Put butter or margarine on the table, as well as salad dressing, and let your child help herself.

You don't have to cut out sugar in your child's diet. Just don't let her fill up on sweets. A dessert a day and sugar on cereal are okay. A candy bar or soda once in a while is also fine.

Child-sized helpings

Use the *Food Guide Pyramid* as a guide to what you

have available for your child, but make her helpings child-sized. Children can get the nutrients they need from a helping one-quarter to one-half the size of an adult's, or one tablespoon per year of age, whichever works better for the particular food. If you're judging bread or a piece of fruit, use the fraction. For a vegetable or rice, the tablespoon might be an easier guide (for example, 3 tablespoons for a 3-year-old).

Your child will probably eat *more* than that—especially of bread. She may eat only part of the foods on the pyramid one day, and the foods from a whole different part the next. But it's amazing how all these different small amounts add up to give her the nutrients she needs.

Every food has a role to play

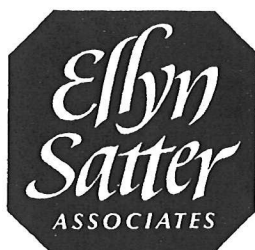
Makers of "super" cereals claim that protein and a day's supply of vitamins and minerals are in every bowl. That's fine, but it's not necessary. Each food has something to offer. Together, those foods should give the nutrients she needs.

This chart lists the main nutrients in each food group:

Breads and cereals	Carbohydrates, energy, B vitamins, iron (If <i>whole grain</i> , also offer vitamin E, zinc, fiber and magnesium)
Fruits and vegetables	Vitamins A and C, fiber, folic acid
Meat, poultry, fish (also dried cooked beans, eggs, nuts)	Protein, iron, zinc, B vitamins
Milk and other dairy products	Protein, calcium, vitamins A and D, riboflavin
Fats and sugars	Fatty acids Energy

Your part in feeding

It's important that you show your child how to eat well by eating well yourself. Remember, your job is to choose and prepare a well-balanced family meal. Include a food that your child generally likes. Then let her do *her* job of deciding what to eat and how much to eat. Trust her. If you do *your* job, in the long run, her nutrition will come out just fine.



Is Fast Food Good Food?^(TG)



"Fast" food and "convenience foods" can all be good for you, if you don't overdo them. Just don't have high-fat, high-salt or high-sugar foods too much.

Combination foods

Some very nutritious foods are made with ingredients from two or more food groups. Think about what goes into a submarine sandwich: It gives you something from the bread group, the milk group (cheese), the meat group (turkey, ham) and the vegetable group (lettuce, tomato, cucumber, carrot, etc.)

Fun foods that make nutritional sense

Here are more examples of foods that give you something from more than one food group:

Food	Meat	Milk	Fruit & Veg	Bread
Chili	•		•	
Tacos, burritos	•	•	•	•
Pizza	•	•	•	•
Spaghetti & meat balls or meat sauce	•		•	•
Lasagna	•	•	•	•
Peanut butter sandwich	•			•
Hamburger on bun	•			•
Hamburger with lettuce and tomato	•		•	•
Cheeseburger	•	•		•
Hotdog on bun	•			•

Completing the meal

When you serve these "fun foods," the menu may be short on fruits and vegetables. Add them—along with the milk your child needs. A complete meal could be hamburgers, raw vegetables and milk; spaghetti with meat sauce, tossed salad and milk; burritos with cheese, chopped lettuce, tomatoes and milk. It can even be hot dogs, raw carrots and milk, or pizza from the frozen foods case at the grocery store, canned peaches—and milk.

Evaluating convenience foods

Canned or frozen dinners or hearty soups can be good menu choices for you and your child if you choose carefully. Look at the list of ingredients. Check the nutrition label. Then use the food composition chart (shown below) to see how the convenience food compares with what you'd make yourself. Ask yourself: Is it a reasonable substitute?

What food should contain

The chart below tells you roughly the amount of protein, fat, carbohydrate, cholesterol, and sodium you could expect to get from a particular food if you make it yourself—from plain ingredients.

Type of Food	Protein (grams)	Fat (grams)	Carbohydrate (grams)	Cholesterol (milligrams)	Sodium (milligrams)
Meat, Poultry, Fish, 1 oz.	7	3-5	0	25	25
Fruit, ½ c. or a piece, unsweetened	Trace	0	10	0	0
Casserole, small serving, or ½ cup	9	7	15	25-50	300
½ sandwich	9	5-10	15	0-75	300
Vegetables, fresh or frozen, ½ cup	2-3	0	2-15	0	25

Questions to ask about convenience foods

Sample Food Label— Macaroni and Cheese Dinner

Does macaroni & cheese dinner have about the same protein fat and carbohydrate as a similar food you'd make yourself?

Is macaroni & cheese dinner as good a source of these nutrients as the "inconvenient" form?

Macaroni & cheese dinner has a *little* vitamin A from the cheese. Casseroles with vegetables would have more.

Casseroles don't generally have vitamin C. You would use this figure to compare powdered or canned orange drinks to orange juice. A serving of orange juice gives a high percentage of the daily requirement of vitamin C. Any convenience orange juice beverage should do the same.

Nutrition Facts	
Serving Size ½ cup (114g)	
Servings Per Container 4	
Amount Per Serving	
Calories 260	Calories from Fat 120
% Daily Value*	
Total Fat 13g	20%
Saturated Fat 5g	25%
Cholesterol 30mg	10%
Sodium 660mg	28%
Total Carbohydrate 31g	11%
Dietary Fiber 0g	0%
Sugars 5g	—
Protein 5g	—
Vitamin A 4%	Vitamin C 2%
Calcium 15%	Iron 4%
* Percent Daily Values are based on a 2,000 calorie diet. Your daily values may be higher or lower depending on your calorie needs:	
	Calories: 2,000 2,500
Total Fat	Less than 65g 80g
Sat Fat	Less than 25g 25g
Cholesterol	Less than 300mg 300mg
Sodium	Less than 2,400mg 2,400mg
Total Carbohydrate	300g 375g
Fiber	25g 30g
Calories per gram:	
Fat 9 • Carbohydrates 4 • Protein 4	

The *Daily Value* is the estimated amount of nutrient most people need in a day. It replaces the U.S. RDA (Recommended Daily Allowance) or RDI (Recommended Daily Intake) on older labels.

Is the amount of sodium about the same as homemade?

Is there a lot of extra sugar? (You wouldn't normally add sugar to main dishes and vegetables.) A teaspoon of sugar weighs 5 grams.

Is boxed macaroni and cheese good food?

Most children love macaroni and cheese from a box. In fact, they usually prefer it to the homemade kind. From reading the label, we can tell that one-half cup of boxed macaroni and cheese has about half the protein and twice the fat, carbohydrate, and sodium as one-half cup of homemade casserole. Yet it has about as much protein as most small children need in a meal (they should have about 15-20 grams of protein per day.) But the fat and sodium (salt) amounts *are* high.

So should your child have boxed macaroni and cheese? It's fine once in a while. Serve fruit and bread along with it and let him enjoy his meal.

Take-out fast food

The hamburger, fried chicken, pizza and taco restaurants are fine once in a while. These fast-food meals have two main drawbacks: The food contains a lot of salt and fat, and it's hard to include fruits and vegetables in the meal (unless there's a salad bar). Still, fast food isn't a problem *unless* it's a big part of your child's diet. Then he won't get the variety of foods he needs for good nutrition.

FEEDING CHILDREN

WHAT PARENTS SHOULD DO:

- ☐ Choose and buy food
- ☐ Make and offer meals
- ☐ Have meals and snacks at regular times
- ☐ Don't give children food handouts
- ☐ Include children in family meals
- ☐ Make foods easy to eat
- ☐ Make foods safe
- ☐ Let children eat like children
- ☐ Let them eat as much as they want
- ☐ Make mealtimes pleasant
- ☐ Talk and smile, but don't be distracting
- ☐ Keep mealtimes calm
- ☐ Teach children to behave at meals

WHAT CHILDREN SHOULD DO:

- ☐ Decide whether or not to eat
- ☐ Decide how much to eat
- ☐ Grow the way nature intended

DIVISION OF RESPONSIBILITY

TODDLER AND OLDER

- **Parent: What, when, where**
- **Child: How much, whether**

Satter, How to Get Your Kid to Eat...But Not Too Much

WHAT IS A GOOD EATER?

IT'S SOMEONE WHO:

- ☐ Likes eating
- ☐ Is interested in food
- ☐ Feels good about eating
- ☐ Likes being at the table
- ☐ Can wait a few minutes to eat when hungry
- ☐ Can try new food and learn to like it
- ☐ Likes a lot of different foods
- ☐ Can eat until full
- ☐ Can stop when full
- ☐ Can eat in other places besides home
- ☐ Can say "no" politely when he/she doesn't want to eat
- ☐ Can be around new or strange food without getting upset
- ☐ Has pretty good table manners
- ☐ Can "make do" with less-favorite food