

Dear parents,

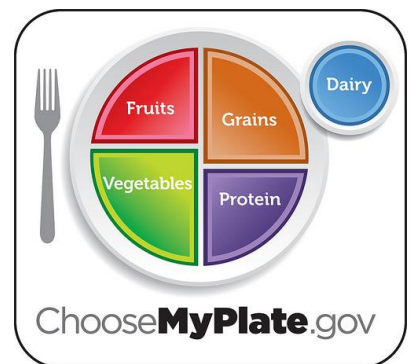
As you may know, Minding Miracles has joined the Grow NJ Kids initiative for creating a new standard of quality for early childhood education in our state. As part of this initiative, we are committed to ensuring that each of our students is receiving a healthy, well-rounded diet and has the opportunity for plenty of physical activity.

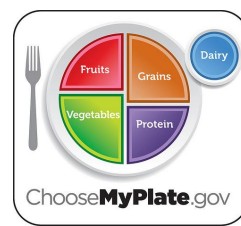
Nutrition is an important part of good health. Proper nutritional education is also an important part of a good childcare program. We have attached the USDA meal guidelines to this letter for your reference. If you need help developing a menu for your child or are having difficulty attaining resources for healthy meals, please feel free to contact our staff. We can assist you in suggestions for school-meal ideas, identify effective feeding behaviors and help in identifying resources to assist your family.

We understand that the preschool years can bring on many “picky eater” behaviors. If you find that your child has an increasingly self-restricted diet, and would like support in this area, please talk to your child’s teacher about techniques and strategies that may be helpful.

Additional resources about childhood health and nutrition can be found in the ‘resources’ tab on our website, MMLCfamily.com. Thank you for teaming-up with us to support the health and well being of our children.

Sincerely,
The staff of Minding Miracles





Foods from Home Policy

Minding Miracles Learning Center acknowledges the importance of good nutrition in the healthy growth and development of young children. The eating practices developed in childhood tend to shape food choices in the future. Presenting healthy foods to children in a positive and consistent manner begins the lifelong process of nutrition management. Children often require repeated exposure to new foods before acceptance. Minding Miracles' staff is happy to support you in recommending behavioral habits and menu choices to assist in the development of healthy habits and food attitudes. As such, our program has established recommendations for parents to follow when packing their child's daily lunch:

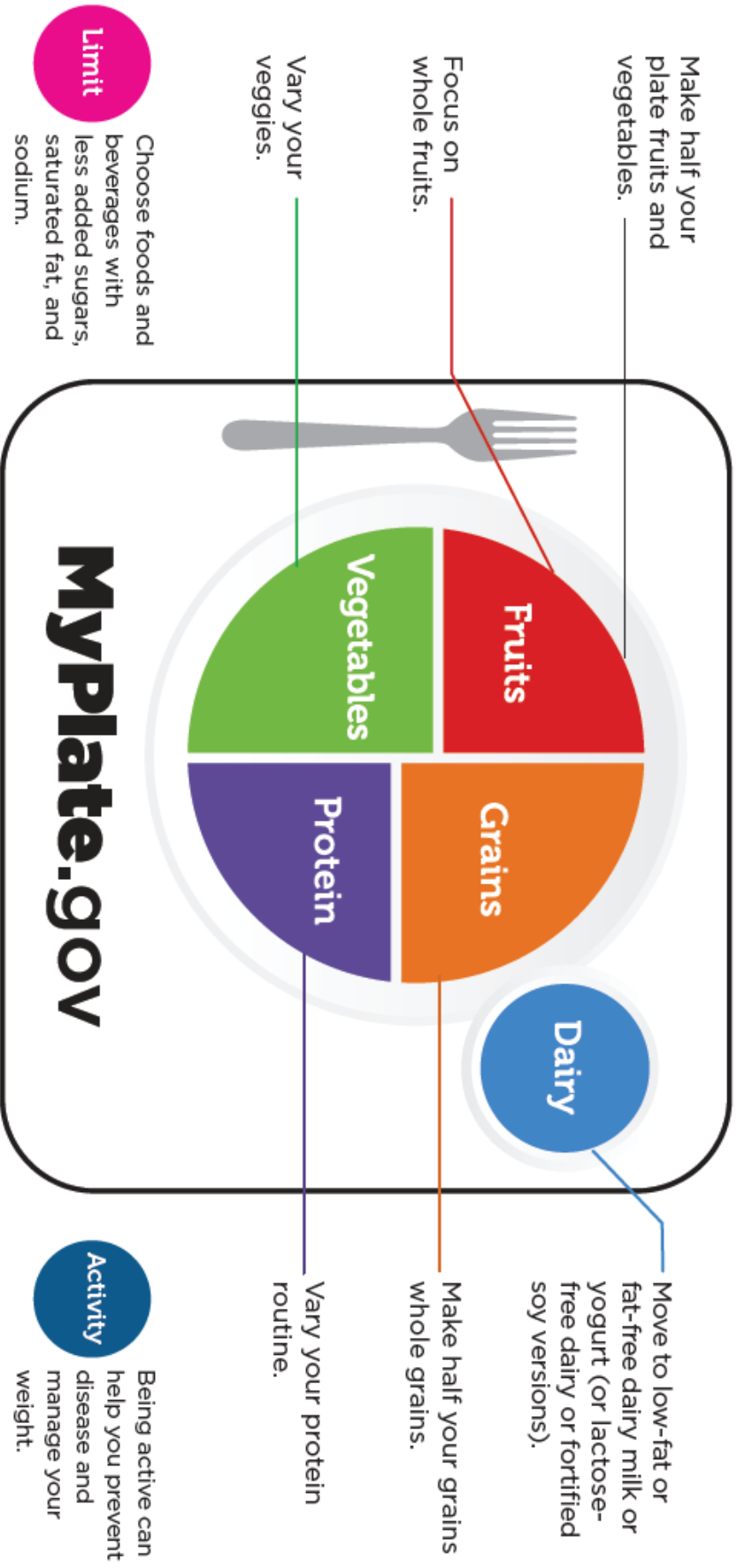
- Include at least one fruit and vegetable per meal. Avoid fruits packed in sugar-based syrup.
- Avoid foods that are high in fat, sugar, trans fats and/or sodium.
- We request that each child come to school with a full water bottle (with a retractable straw or cover). The water will be made available to your child throughout the day and can be refilled from our Poland Springs cooler as needed.
- Limit 100% fruit juice to 6oz. per day and avoid all sugar-sweetened beverages. Do not provide juice to children under the age of 1.
- Provide skim or 1% fat milk to children over the age of two.
- Select breads and crackers with high proportion of whole-grains.
- Provide healthy selections when brining in birthday or holiday celebration treats.
- Lunch containers should be labeled with the child's full name.
- Milk should be labeled with the child's full name and date.

Suggestions:

- Picky eaters may do well with a 'Bento Box' style meal in which small portions of several healthy foods are provided to promote choice and variety (ex- a hard boiled egg, pretzels with hummus, half of a clementine, a few raw green beans, a cheese stick and 2 turkey roll-ups).
- For children who are reluctant to switch from juice to water, try diluting the juice or adding fresh fruit (such as sliced strawberries) into the juice for flavor (fade out as your child becomes tolerant of the water).
- There are many healthy alternatives to our kid's favorite 'treats.' Most retail stores stock cookies that contain veggies or crackers that are made from whole-grains. Small changes can make a huge difference.
- Encourage moderation. Our children need ongoing exposure to healthy foods and healthy habits. However, exposure to the 'unhealthy alternatives' is inevitable. Kiddos that develop an understanding of rare and sensible consumption of less-healthy foods grow up to make wise food choices.

Start *simple* with **MyPlate**

Healthy eating is important at every life stage,
with benefits that add up over time, bite by bite. Small changes matter.



Limit
Choose foods and beverages with less added sugars, saturated fat, and sodium.

Activity
Being active can help you prevent disease and manage your weight.

Healthy Tips for Picky Eaters



Do any of the statements below remind you of your child?

“Ebony will only eat peanut butter sandwiches.”

“Michael won’t eat anything green, just because of the color.”

“Bananas used to be Matt’s favorite food, but now he won’t even touch them.”

Your child may eat only a certain type of food or refuse foods based on a certain color or texture. He or she may also play at the table and may not want to eat. Don’t worry if your child has some picky eating behaviors. Picky eating behavior is common for many children from the age of 2 to 5 years. As long as your child is growing as the doctor suggests, he or she is most likely eating enough to be healthy. If you have concerns about your child’s growth or eating behavior, talk to your child’s doctor.

How to cope with picky eating

Your child’s picky eating is temporary. If you don’t make it a big deal, it will usually end before school age. Try the following tips to help you deal with your child’s picky eating behavior in a positive way. Check the ones that work for you and your child.

- Let your kids be “produce pickers.”** Let them pick out fruits and veggies at the store.
- Have your child help you prepare meals.** Children learn about food and get excited about tasting food when they help make meals. Let them add ingredients, scrub veggies, or help stir food.



- Offer choices.** Rather than ask, “Do you want broccoli for dinner?” ask “Which would you like for dinner, broccoli or cauliflower?”
- Enjoy each other while eating family meals together.** Talk about what family members did during the day, what made you laugh, or what you did for fun. Turn off the TV and keep phones away from the table to focus on family time.
- Offer the same foods for the whole family.** Serve the same meal to adults and kids. Let them see you enjoy a variety of healthy foods. Talk about the colors, shapes, and textures on the plate.



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Food and Nutrition Service
FNS-455
Revised March 2018

Trying new foods

Your child may not want to try new foods. It is normal for children to reject foods they have never tried before. Here are some tips to get your child to try new foods:



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Start with small portions. Let your kids try small portions of new foods that you enjoy. Give them a small taste at first and be patient with them. When they develop a taste for more types of foods, it's easier to plan family meals.

Offer one new food at a time. Serve something that you know your child likes along with the new food. Offering more new foods all at once could be too much for your child.

Be a good role model. Try new foods yourself. Describe their taste, texture, and smell to your child.

Offer new foods first. Your child is most hungry at the start of a meal.

Offer new foods many times. Sometimes, new foods take time. Kids don't always take to new foods right away. It may take up to a dozen tries for a child to accept a new food.



Let your kids learn by serving themselves. Teach them to take small amounts at first. Tell your kids that they can get more food if they are still hungry.



They learn from watching you. Eat fruits and vegetables and your child will too.

Make food fun!

Help your child develop healthy eating habits by getting him or her involved and making food fun! Get creative in the kitchen with these cool ideas. Check the ones you try at home, and be sure to add your own ideas, too!



Make meals and memories together. It's a lesson they'll use for life.

Cut a food into fun and easy shapes with cookie cutters.

Encourage your child to invent and help prepare new snacks. Create new tastes by mixing two or more food groups together to make interesting pairings.

Name a food your child helps create.

Make a big deal of serving "Maria's Salad" or "Peter's Sweet Potatoes" for dinner.

Our family ideas to make food fun:



For more great tips on these and other subjects, go to:

ChooseMyPlate.gov/preschoolers/

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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.



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Healthy Eating for Kids

Healthy eating is important at every age. Offer kids 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:



Offer variety

Include choices from each food group—fruits, vegetables, grains, protein foods, and dairy or fortified soy alternatives—in meals and snacks during each day.



Connect at mealtime

Eat meals together whenever possible. Turn off the TV and put away phones and tablets, so you can “unplug” and focus on healthy foods and each other.



Make good nutrition easy

Designate a shelf or a drawer in your fridge for your kids. Stock it with cut-up fruits and vegetables, yogurt, nut butters, and whole-wheat mini bagels and crackers.



Think about their drinks

Make water and low-fat or fat-free dairy milk or fortified soy alternatives easy options to grab in your home. Have ready-to-go containers filled and in the fridge to take on outings.



Get kids involved

Depending on their age, kids can peel fruits, assemble salads, measure, scoop, and slice. Let them create and name their own side dish.



Have a shopping buddy

Let kids participate in grocery shopping online or in the store. Reward them by letting them choose their favorite fruit or maybe a new one.

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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.