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Child Care: What Will My Child Eat?

Did you know that our child care site participates in the Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP)? Meals and snacks served through the CACFP help give preschoolers the nutrients they need to learn, grow, and be healthy. We provide a variety of vegetables, fruits, whole grains, low-fat dairy, and lean protein foods. We also offer water throughout the day.

What's for Lunch?*

- ¾ cup low-fat (1%) milk
- ¼ cup fruits**
- ¼ cup vegetables
- ½ ounce equivalent of grains (such as a ½ slice of bread or ¼ cup of pasta or rice)
- 1½ ounce equivalent of meat or meat alternate (such as cheese, yogurt, or beans)

*Portions for children ages 3 through 5.
**Additional vegetables may be served in place of fruits.

What's for Snack?*

Snacks can vary. Here are some examples:

Example 1:

- ½ ounce equivalent of meat or meat alternate
- ½ cup fruit

Example 2:

- ½ cup vegetables
- ½ ounce equivalent of grains

Example 3:

- ½ cup milk
- ½ ounce equivalent of grains

Example 4:

- ½ cup vegetables
- ½ ounce equivalent of meat or meat alternate

*Portions for children ages 3 through 5.

Healthy Foods + Healthy Environments = Healthy Kids

At child care, we encourage healthy choices in ways that go beyond our menu:

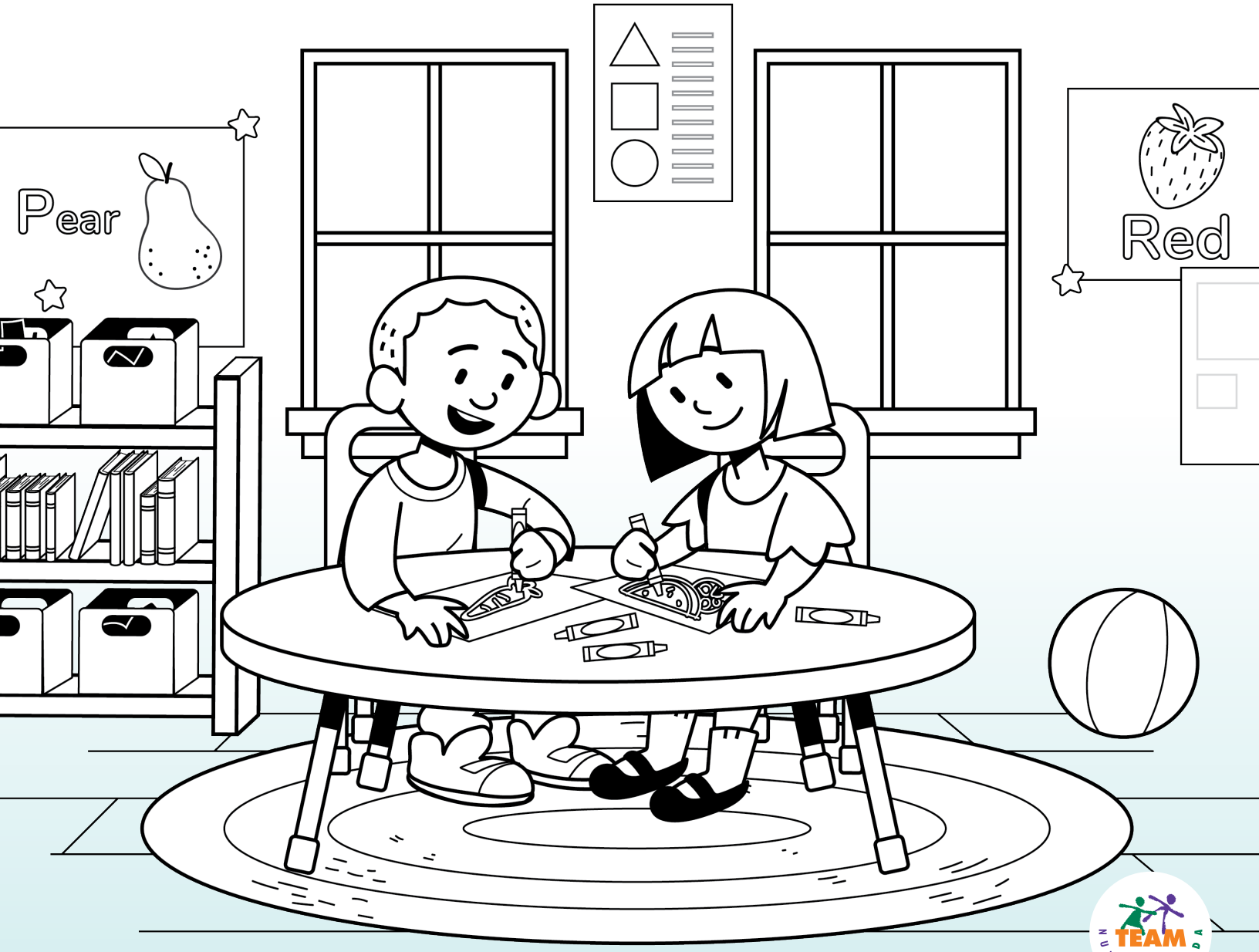
1 **Look around.** See how our site displays pictures of healthy foods. Ask your child to point out their favorite picture.

2 **Read about it.** Our bookshelf includes stories about trying new foods. Ask if you can borrow a book to read to your child.

3 **Try fun activities.** We do a number of activities involving growing and tasting new foods. Ask your child their favorite activity and try it at home.

Activity

Have your child color the picture below:



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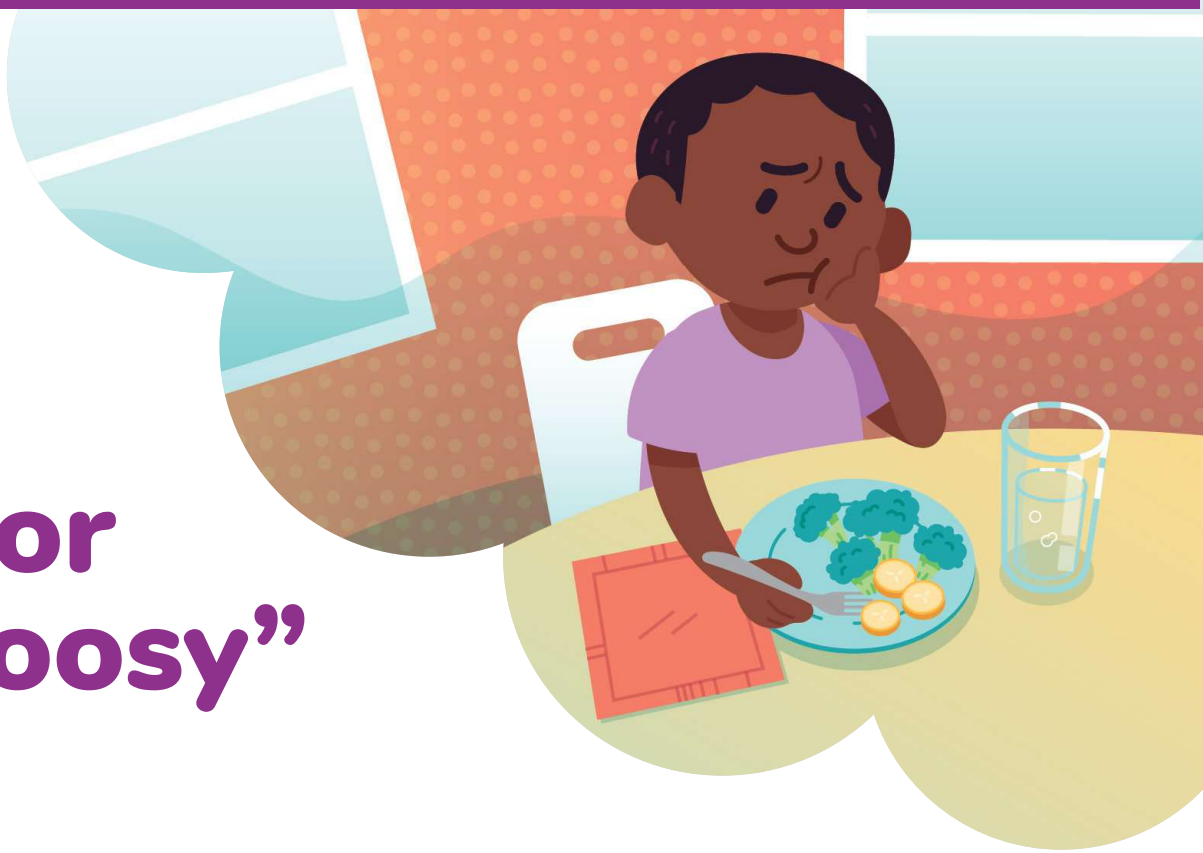

Tips for a "Choosy" Eater

"Choosy" eating is common among preschoolers. Your child may eat only certain types of foods. He or she may play at the table and not want to eat. Don't worry. As long as your child has energy and is growing, he or she is most likely eating enough.

How to Cope with a "Choosy" Eater

1. Consider what your child eats over several days. Most children eat more variety throughout the week than in 1 day.
2. Trust your child's appetite. Don't force him or her to eat everything on the plate. Making a child eat when he or she is not hungry may encourage overeating.
3. Set reasonable time limits for the start and end of a meal. Remove the plate quietly. What is reasonable depends on your child.
4. Stay positive. Avoid calling your child a "picky eater." Children believe what you say.
5. Offer healthy choices for your child to choose from. For example, "Would you like broccoli or carrots for dinner?"

Ways to Encourage Your Child to Try New Foods

1. **Offer one new food at a time.** Start small. Let your child try small portions of new foods.
2. **Offer new foods first.** Your child is most hungry at the start of a meal.
3. **Cook and garden together.** These activities make new fruits and vegetables fun.
4. **Be a good role model.** Try new foods yourself. Describe the taste, texture, and smell.
5. **Be patient, new foods take time.** It may take 10 or more tries for a child to accept a new food.

New Food Badges

Celebrate with these fun badges for trying new foods. Simply cut the badge out and attach tape to the back.

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Developing a Taste for Less Sodium

Sodium (salt) is found in many foods we eat, even if they do not taste salty. Children, like adults, get more sodium than their bodies need.

If salty foods are eaten often, children may develop a preference for salt in foods. By offering foods and drinks that are lower in sodium, adults can help children develop healthy eating patterns. Starting early in life can be easier than trying to change eating habits later on. This may help reduce the risk of certain health problems like high blood pressure.

How Can I Find the Lower Sodium Option?

The Nutrition Facts label on food packages lists the amount of sodium in a food. Compare the amount of sodium in similar types of foods, such as crackers, and choose the ones that are lower in sodium.

How Much Sodium Is Too Much?

Children ages 1–3 years should get less than 1,200 milligrams (mg) of sodium per day. Children ages 4–8 years should get less than 1,500 mg per day.

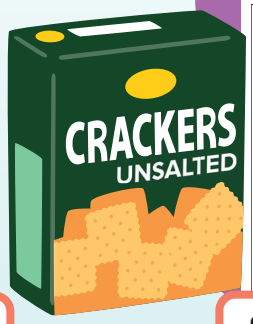
Check out the **MyPlate Plan** to find an eating plan that is right for your child.

Nutrition Facts
28 servings per container
Serving size 5 Crackers

Amount per serving
Calories 70

	% Daily Value*
Total Fat 1.5g	2%
Saturated Fat 0g	0%
Trans Fat 0g	
Cholesterol 0mg	0%

Sodium 135mg



Nutrition Facts
28 servings per container
Serving size 5 Crackers

Amount per serving
Calories 70

	% Daily Value*
Total Fat 1.5g	2%
Saturated Fat 0g	0%
Trans Fat 0g	
Cholesterol 0mg	0%

Sodium 60mg

How Can I Lower Sodium in Meals and Snacks?

Here are a few strategies that can lower the sodium you and your family eat:

At the grocery store:

- Buy unprocessed protein foods such as lean chicken, turkey, seafood, pork, and meat more often than prepared, processed, and ready-to-eat meat and poultry. Examples of processed and prepared meats and poultry are sausages, bologna, frankfurters (hot dogs), luncheon meats (deli meats), pepperoni, and pre-marinated options.
- Look at labels on canned and packaged foods. Choose unsalted (no salt added), low-sodium, reduced sodium, or lightly salted foods instead of regular versions.
- Buy fruits and vegetables as snacks instead of chips, pretzels, and other salty snacks.

At home:

Rinse canned beans and vegetables under cold water.

Use herbs and spices instead of salt.

Cook at home more often.

How Can I Cook Foods With Lower Sodium Ingredients?

Herbs, spices, garlic, lemon juice, and vinegars are examples of ingredients you can use to add flavor to foods without adding salt. Avoid seasoning blends that contain sodium or salt (like garlic salt, seasoning salt, etc.).

Try **"Fish and Veggie Packets"** at your next meal. Find this recipe and more at **www.theicn.org/cnrb.**

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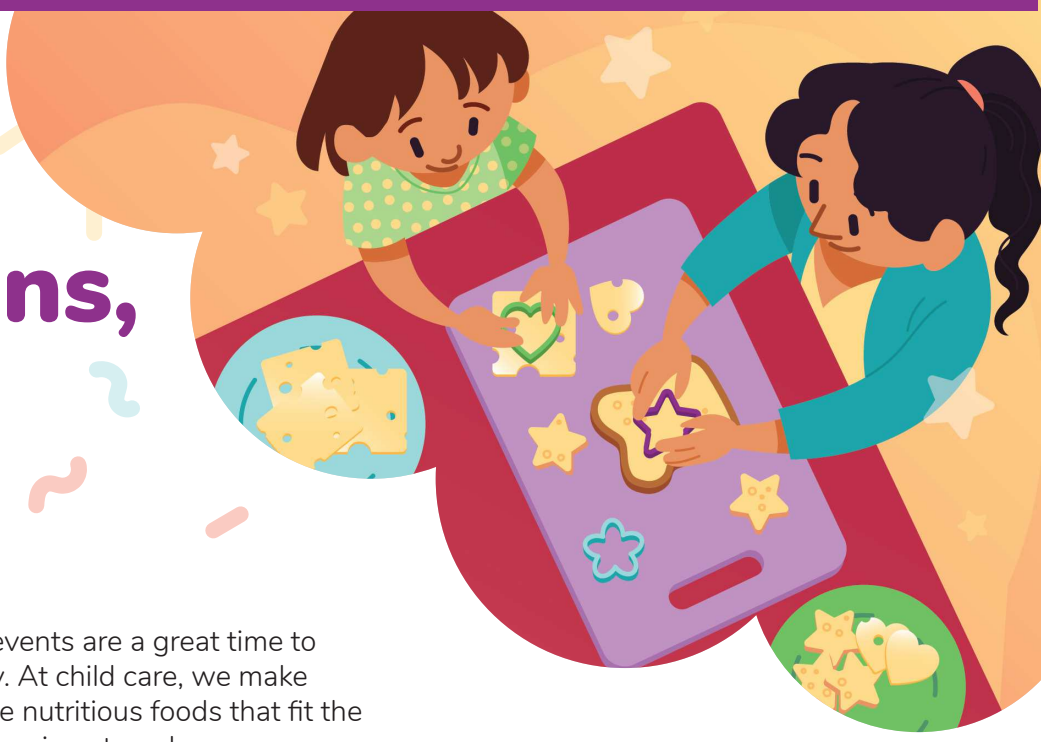
Healthy Celebrations, Lasting Memories



Birthdays, celebrations, and seasonal events are a great time to include nutritious foods and active play. At child care, we make healthy habits part of the fun. We serve nutritious foods that fit the theme and plan fun activities such as music, art, and games.

Fun Ideas To Try at Home:

1. **Create fun food.** Use cookie cutters to cut fruits, low-fat cheese, or breads into shapes that fit the theme (such as hearts, flowers, or pumpkins).
2. **Get moving.** Plan activities like soccer, obstacle courses, tag, dancing, ball tosses, or jump rope.
3. **Get colorful.** Choose fruits and vegetables that fit the festivities, such as red fruits like watermelon or strawberries for Valentine's Day.
4. **Go simple with drinks.** Water and low-fat (1%) or fat-free (skim) milk are good choices for preschoolers. Serve drinks in colorful cups that match the event theme.
5. **Decorate together.** Children love to create centerpieces, signs, placemats, and garlands using basic arts and craft supplies. Supervise activities with scissors.

Ways To Recognize Birthdays and Achievements

1. Let your child wear a special crown, ribbon, or button all day.
2. Give a special card or note sharing your love.
3. Let your child sit at the head of the table or decorate his or her chair.
4. Make time for a special walk or game, just for the two of you.
5. Give hugs and high fives.

Celebrate with Fun Food Activities

Add simple food activities to your celebration with these fun Look and Cook Recipes: **https://www.fns.usda.gov/tn/discover-myplate-look-and-cook-recipes**

- Friendship Pocket
- Crunchy Rainbow Wrap
- Fruit-a-licious Breakfast Cup
- Food Group Friend

Celebration Ribbons

Cut the ribbons out and tape to your child's shirt for special celebrations.

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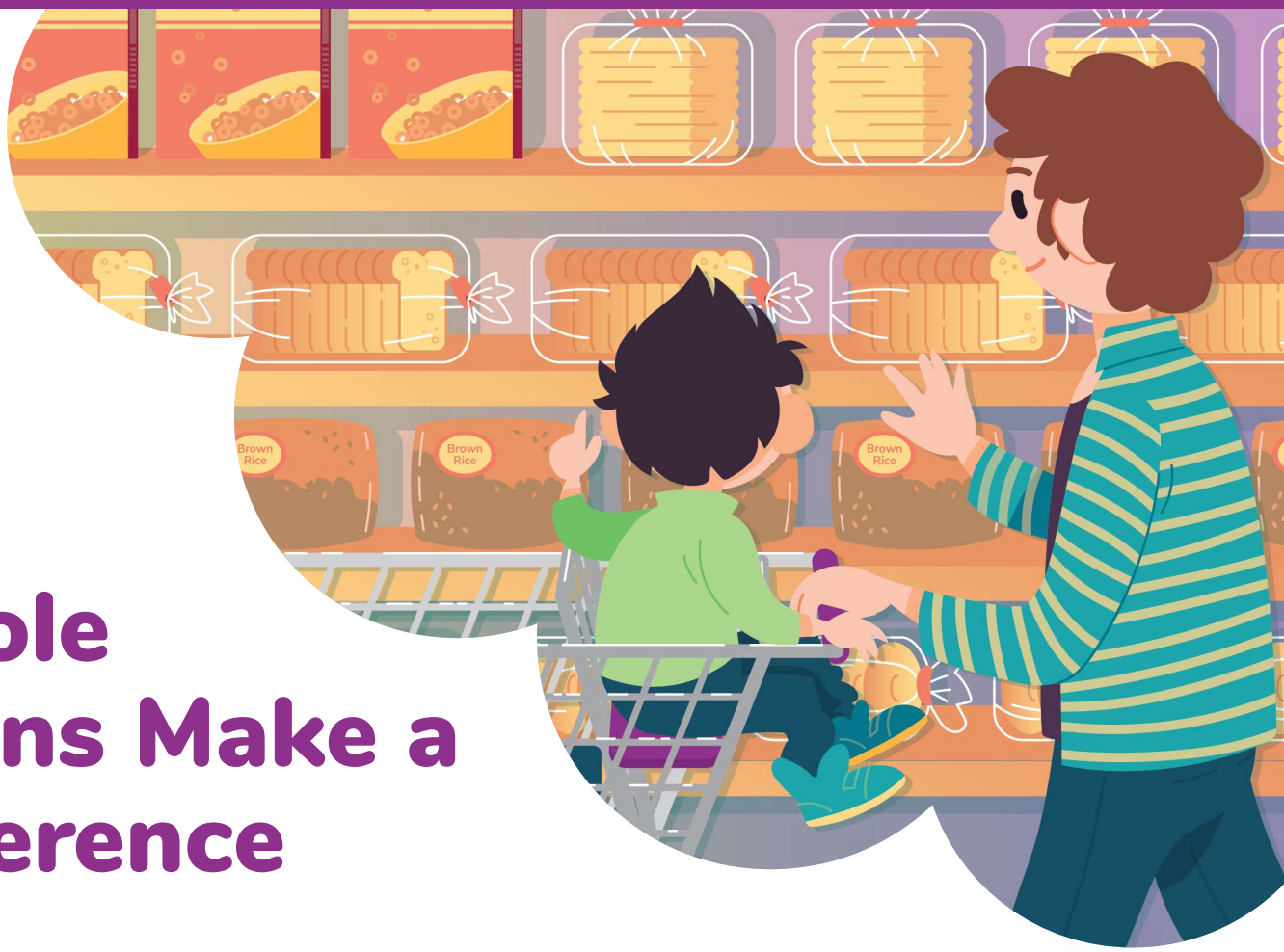


Whole Grains Make a Difference

Children, like adults, need whole grains every day. Whole grains have B vitamins, minerals, and fiber to keep your child strong and healthy. It's easier to get your child in the habit of eating and enjoying whole grains if you start when they are young. At child care, we include whole grains at meals and/or snacks.

Here are some ways you can enjoy whole grains at home. Check off the ones you have tried. Add your own ideas to the list, too!

- ☐ Whole-wheat bread, rolls, bagels
- ☐ White whole-wheat bread
- ☐ Whole-grain cereal
- ☐ Brown rice
- ☐ Whole-wheat pasta
- ☐ Oatmeal
- ☐ Whole-grain tortillas
- ☐ Whole-wheat waffles or pancakes
- ☐ Whole-wheat crackers
- ☐ _____
- ☐ _____
- ☐ _____
- ☐ _____
- ☐ _____

Whole Grains: How Much Is Enough Each Day?

Q: How many whole grains should my family eat every day?

A: In general, most adults need to eat about 6 to 8 ounces of grains daily. Examples of grains include bread, cereal, pasta, rice, and tortillas. Preschoolers* need less – about 4 to 5 ounces. A good rule of thumb is that at least half of these grains should be whole grains. That's about 3 ounces of whole grains for adults each day, and 2 ounces of whole grains for preschoolers.

*For preschoolers that are moderately active.

Q: How can I tell if a grain is a whole grain?

A: Choose foods that name one of the following whole-grain ingredients first on the label's ingredient list:

- **brown rice**
- **buckwheat**
- **bulgur**
- **millet**
- **oatmeal**
- **quinoa**
- **rolled oats**
- **whole-grain barley**
- **whole-grain corn**
- **whole-grain sorghum**
- **whole-grain triticale**
- **whole oats**
- **whole rye**
- **whole wheat**
- **wild rice**

Try it out!

Which of the following foods is a whole grain? Circle your answer.

(A) Bread

Ingredients: whole-wheat flour, malted barley flour, niacin, iron, riboflavin, folic acid

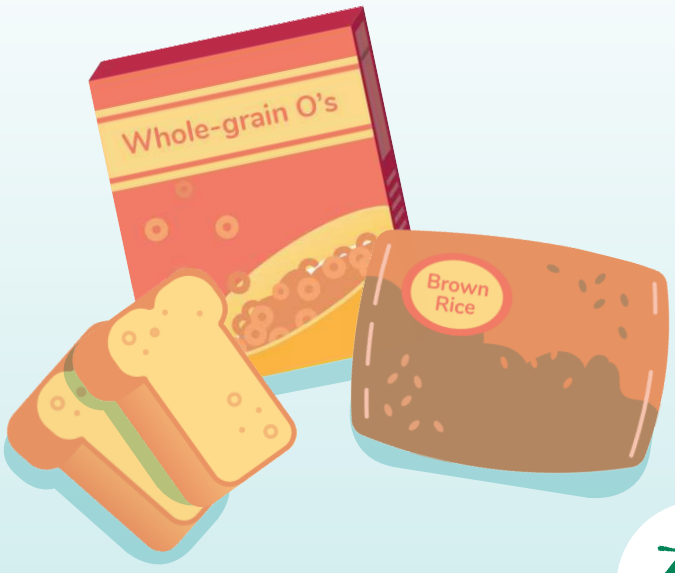
(B) Tortilla

Ingredients: wheat flour, soybean oil, salt, corn, starch, wheat starch

(C) Roll

Ingredients: unbleached enriched wheat flour, sugar, salt, soybean oil, and yellow corn meal

Answer Key: A is a whole-grain because it has whole-wheat flour as the first grain ingredient. Whole-wheat is a whole grain.



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Portions for Preschoolers

At child care, the amount of food served at meals and snacks depends on the age of the child. A reasonable portion for preschoolers is smaller than for teens or adults.

The chart below shows how portions compare for adults and preschoolers. It may not look like a lot, but the amounts shown below are just right for preschoolers' small stomachs and energy needs.

Examples of Portions for Adults and Preschoolers

	Preschooler	Adult
Breakfast	½ cup breakfast cereal flakes ½ cup sliced strawberries ¾ cup low-fat (1%) milk	1 cup breakfast cereal flakes 1 slice of whole-wheat bread ½ cup sliced strawberries 1 cup low-fat (1%) milk
Dinner	1½ ounces oven-baked chicken ¼ cup baked sweet potatoes ¼ cup cooked brown rice ¼ cup fruit salad ¾ cup low-fat (1%) milk	2 ounces oven-baked chicken ½ cup baked sweet potatoes ½ cup cooked brown rice ½ cup fruit salad 1 dinner roll 1 cup low-fat (1%) milk

Teaching Healthy Eating Habits

Offer preschool-sized portions, not adult portions. This helps your child learn to pay attention to whether he or she feels hungry or full. Smaller amounts help your child only eat what his or her body needs. If your child is still hungry, he or she will ask for more. When your child is served smaller amounts, less food is wasted.

Helpful tips for feeding your preschooler:

- Use smaller bowls, plates, and cups for smaller portions.
- Let your child practice serving himself or herself smaller portions.
- Do not force your child to finish everything on his or her plate.

Sample portion sizes by types of foods

At home, you can use the chart below as a general guide for the amount of a particular food to serve at meals. See the front page of this handout for information on how foods might be served together to make a meal. Children's appetites vary from day to day. Some days they may eat less than these portion amounts; other days they may want more.

When planning meals and snacks, smaller stomachs need smaller portions.

	Preschool Portions
Dairy	¾ cup milk ¾ cup yogurt 1½ ounces of cheese
Vegetables	¼ to ½ cup vegetables ½ to 1 cup raw, leafy green vegetables (such as salad)
Fruits	¼ to ½ cup fruits ⅛ to ¼ cup dried fruit
Grains	¼ cup cooked rice or pasta ½ slice of bread ¼ cup of cooked breakfast cereal ½ cup ready-to-eat breakfast cereal flakes or rounds ¾ cup puffed ready-to-eat breakfast cereal
Protein Foods	½ to 1½ ounces lean meat, poultry, or fish ½ to 1½ ounces of tofu ⅛ to ⅜ cup cooked beans 1 to 3 tablespoons peanut butter (spread thinly to prevent choking) ¼ to ¾ of a large egg

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Healthy Meals with MyPlate

Preschoolers need foods from all five food groups to grow and be healthy. The five food groups on MyPlate are: Vegetables, Fruits, Grains, Protein Foods, and Dairy.

Planning meals and snacks that include foods and drinks from all of the food groups is important. This helps your child get the nutrients he or she needs for good health. Offer your child foods and drinks with fewer added sugars, sodium, and saturated fats.

Help Your Child Learn About MyPlate

At child care, we use MyPlate to help children learn about healthy eating. Here are some easy and fun ways you can teach about MyPlate at home:

- Find free MyPlate activities at **https://teamnutrition.usda.gov**.
- Be a healthy role model. Show your child how you fill half your plate with fruits and vegetables.
- At meal time, talk with your child about the foods you are eating. Name the MyPlate food groups represented on your plate.

Help Your Child Enjoy Foods from the Five MyPlate Food Groups

Fruits

Offer a variety of fruits such as apples, berries, and peaches.

Vegetables

Help your child discover a variety of vegetables. Introduce him or her to dark-green, red, and orange vegetables, beans and peas, and other vegetables.

Grains

Make at least half of your child's grains whole grains. Choose a variety of whole-grain foods, such as whole-wheat bread, oatmeal, whole grain tortillas, and brown rice.

Protein Foods

Serve a variety of protein foods during the week, including seafood, beans, and peas. Some tasty ways to include these proteins include: hummus, bean soup, fish tacos, or salmon patties.

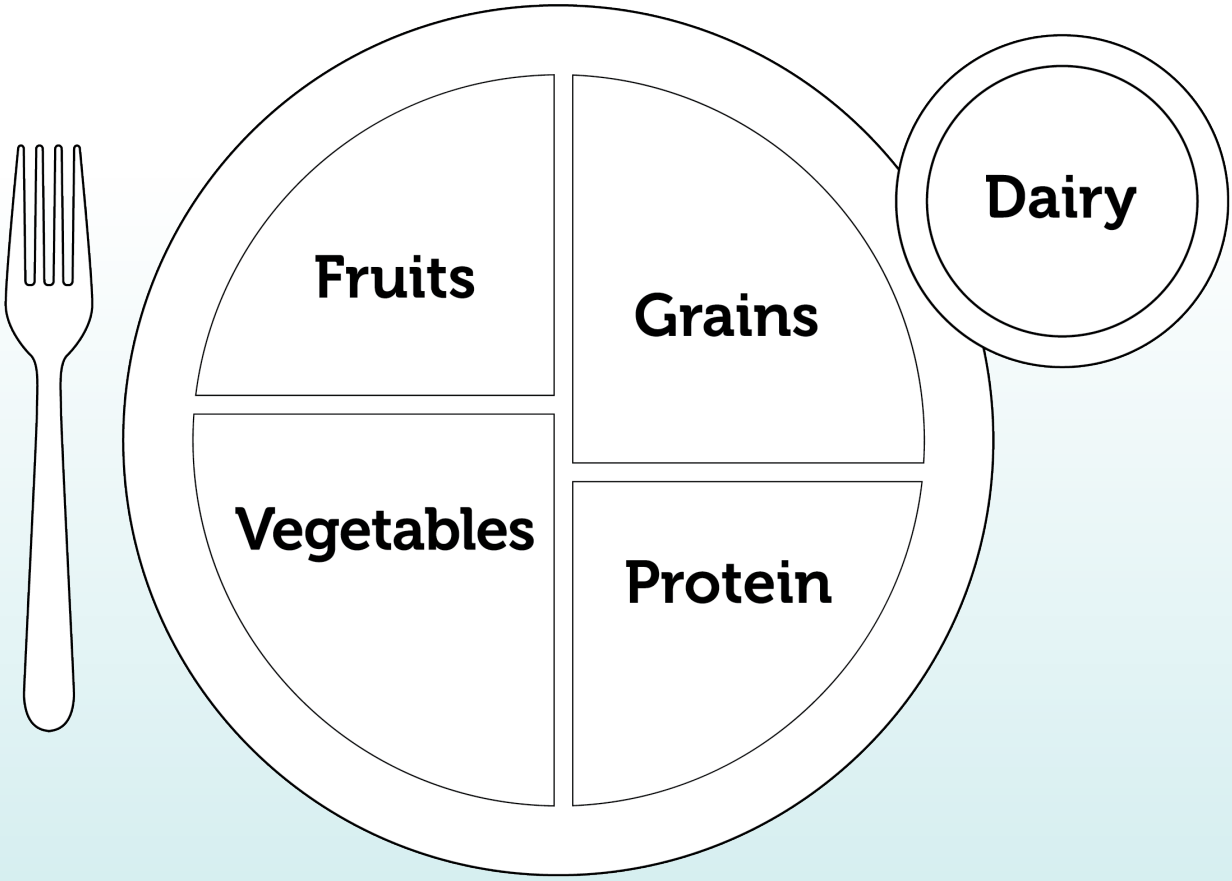
Dairy

Offer low-fat dairy foods such as milk, yogurt, and cheese at meals or snacks.

Serve foods in appropriate sizes, shapes, and textures to reduce the risk of choking. Supervise your child during meals and snacks.

MyPlate Coloring Activity

Talk to your child about the five MyPlate food groups. Then, have your child color the MyPlate below.



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Water: It's a Great Choice

At child care, we offer water to your preschooler throughout the day. This is a great drink choice for kids because it doesn't contain added sugars or caffeine.

- Water helps to hydrate your child's body.
- Drinking tap water with fluoride (also known as fluoridated tap water) can help prevent cavities.
- Drinking water between meals and snacks can help rinse food from teeth.

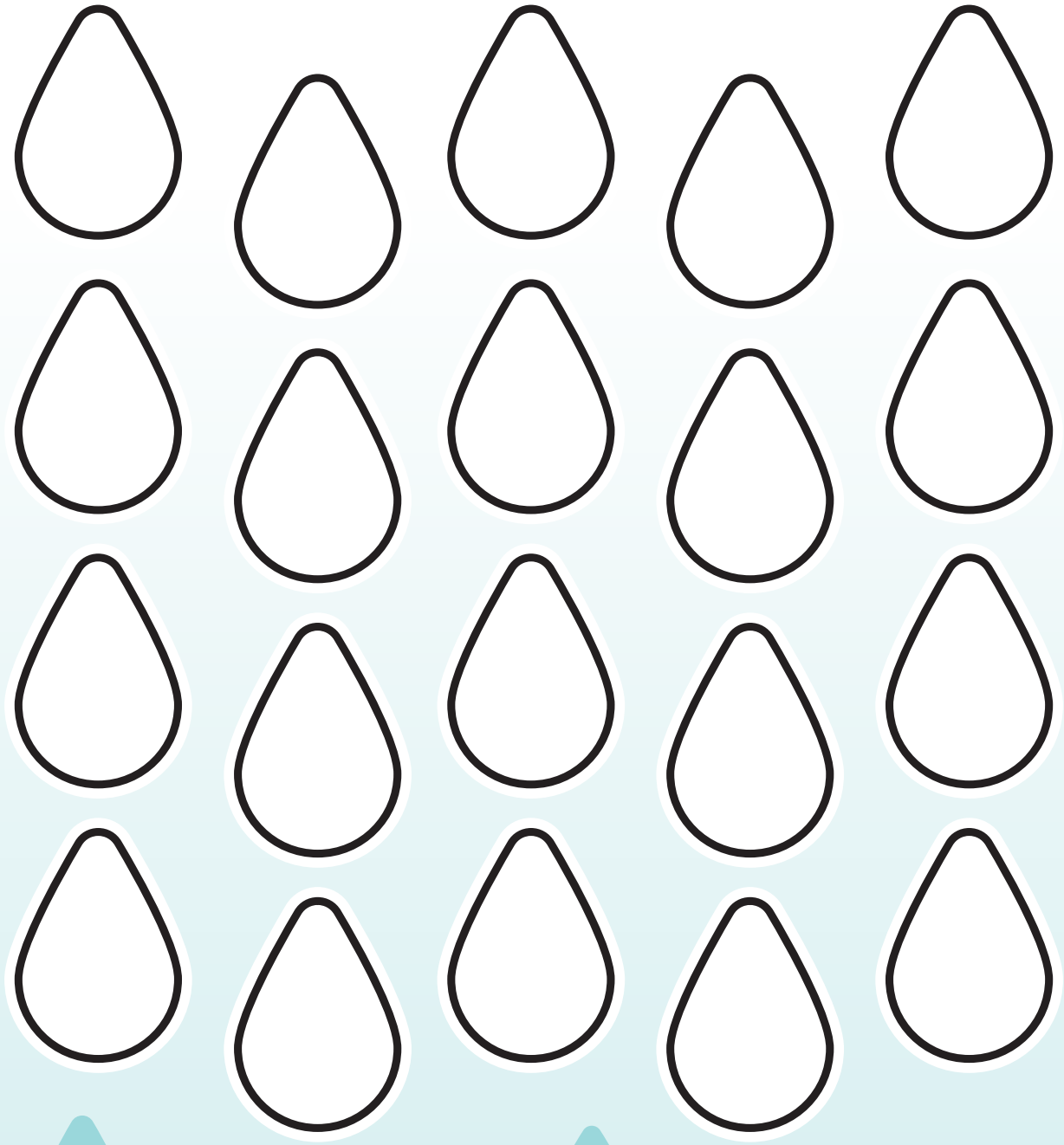
Preschoolers need extra water to drink when they are physically active or when it is hot outside. At child care, we have regular water breaks before and during active play.

What you can do at home:

- Offer water between meals and snacks.
- Encourage your child to drink water by being a role model and drinking water yourself.
- Keep child-sized cups by the sink where your child can reach them.

Color the Water Drop

You can make drinking water fun for your child.
Every time your child drinks water, ask him or her to color a water drop below.



Great Job!

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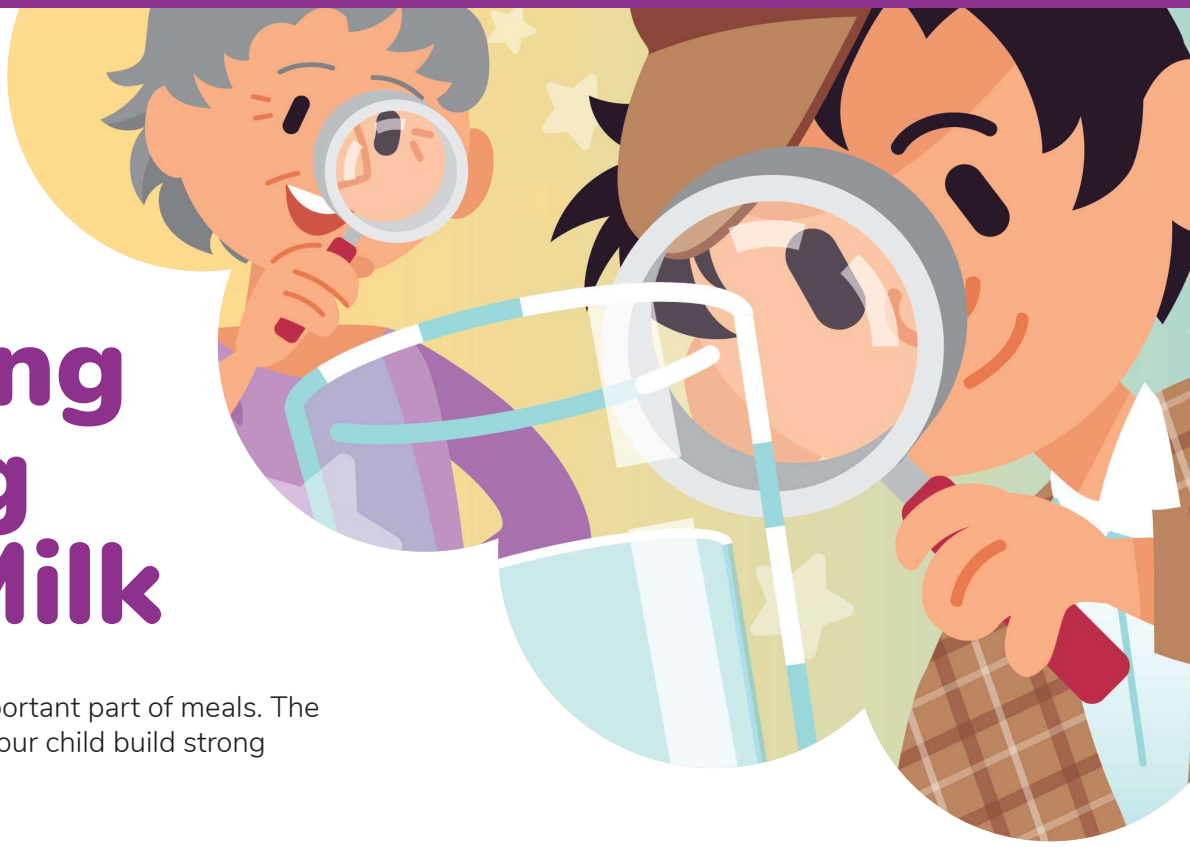


Growing Strong with Milk

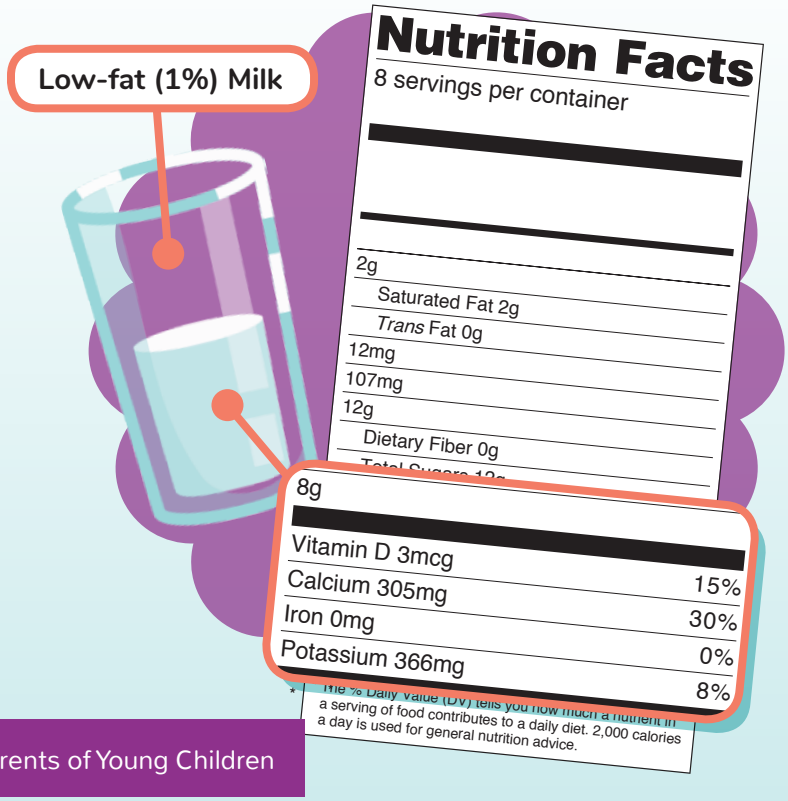
At child care, milk is an important part of meals. The nutrients in milk can help your child build strong bones and muscles.

Why Does Our Child Care Serve Milk?

Milk provides vitamins, minerals, and protein. Low-fat (1%) and fat-free (skim) milk have the same nutrients as whole milk, but less saturated fat. Choosing healthier sources of fats, while eating fewer saturated fats, is good for heart health.

Be a Dairy Detective

Let's take a closer look at milk. Cow's milk is a good source of calcium, protein, vitamin D, and vitamin A. Take a look at the Nutrition Facts label to the right to see what you're getting in a cup of low-fat (1%) milk.



Encouraging Milk as Children Age

- **Take changes slowly.** After your child turns 2 years old, consider changing from whole milk to low-fat milk. Start by switching to reduced-fat (2%) milk for a few weeks. When your child gets used to reduced-fat milk (2%), try low-fat (1%) or fat-free (skim) milk.
- **Enjoy smoothies.** Blend low-fat milk with fruits and low-fat yogurt.
- **Make it special.** Offer low-fat milk in your child's favorite cup.
- **Be a healthy role model.** Encourage the whole family to drink low-fat milk with meals.

Tummy Troubles

If your child is lactose intolerant or gets stomach pains, gas, or bloating after drinking milk, try lactose-free milk and talk with your child's doctor. If you would like your child to drink soymilk at child care, please send a written note. A parent or guardian can make the request. A doctor's note is not required as long as the soymilk meets certain nutrition standards. Soymilk served in child care must have the same amount of calcium, protein, vitamin A, and vitamin D as cow's milk.

At child care, "milk-like" beverages that do not contain the same amounts of calcium, protein, vitamin A, and vitamin D as cow's milk cannot be served in place of cow's milk without a doctor's note.

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Vary Your Protein Foods

Eating foods from all five MyPlate food groups gives your child the nutrition he or she needs to grow and be healthy. The five food groups are: Fruits, Vegetables, Grains, Protein Foods, and Dairy.

At child care, we serve a variety of protein foods to help your child get the nutrients he or she needs for health and growth. Protein supports growing muscles. The iron in protein foods helps carry oxygen within the blood. Certain protein foods, such as seafood and nuts, contain healthy fats that support heart health.

Does my child eat enough protein?

Most preschoolers eat enough protein foods. However, children do not always eat a variety of protein foods. Offering fish or beans at some meals during the week is one way to add more variety to your family's meals.

Examples of protein foods to look for when shopping:

- Beans and peas
- Beef
- Chicken and turkey
- Eggs
- Nuts and nut/seed butters
- Pork
- Seafood (fish and shellfish)
- Tofu and other soy products

Questions About Protein Foods

What if my family doesn't eat certain foods in the Protein Foods Group?

Your child can get enough protein as long as he or she eats a variety of foods from the Protein Foods group. Protein sources for vegetarians include eggs (for ovo-vegetarians), beans and peas, nut/seed butters, and soy products (such as tofu). If you have concerns about what your child is eating, talk with your child's doctor. He or she may want to check to see if your child is getting enough iron from protein foods and other sources.

How can I offer healthier choices?

Use these ideas for healthier ways to select and prepare meats, chicken, and turkey:

- Remove the skin from chicken or turkey before or after cooking. Remove any bones to prevent choking.
- Choose lean or low-fat cuts of meat like round or sirloin. Select ground beef that is at least 92% lean. Trim fat from meat.
- Try grilling, broiling, roasting, or baking — these cooking methods don't add extra fat. Some lean meats need slow, moist cooking to be tender — try a slow cooker.

Are some protein foods higher in sodium (salt)?

The Nutrition Facts label on food packages lists the amount of sodium in a food. Compare the amount of sodium in similar types of foods, and choose ones that are lower in sodium. If using canned beans, look for cans labeled "reduced-sodium." Fresh chicken, turkey, seafood, pork, and meat is usually lower in sodium than processed meat and poultry. Examples of processed meats and poultry are sausages, bologna, frankfurters (hot dogs), luncheon meats and loaves, pepperoni, and pre-marinated chicken. Choosing foods that are lower in sodium can help you lower your family's risk of high blood pressure and related diseases.

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Encouraging Vegetables

If your child is like many preschoolers, he or she probably doesn't eat enough vegetables each day. Many children this age can be "choosy" eaters. It can take children 10 or more tries before they like a new food. Keep trying. Your efforts will help your child have healthier eating habits later.

Offering Vegetables Can:

- Help your child get important nutrients like potassium, folate (folic acid), vitamin A, and vitamin C.
- Provide dietary fiber to help your child feel full. This makes bathroom time easier, too.
- Add color, crunch, and flavor to meals or snacks.
- Help your child develop healthy eating habits that may reduce the risk of certain diseases, like heart disease and Type 2 diabetes, later in life.

Fresh, Frozen, and Canned Vegetables Are All Smart Choices

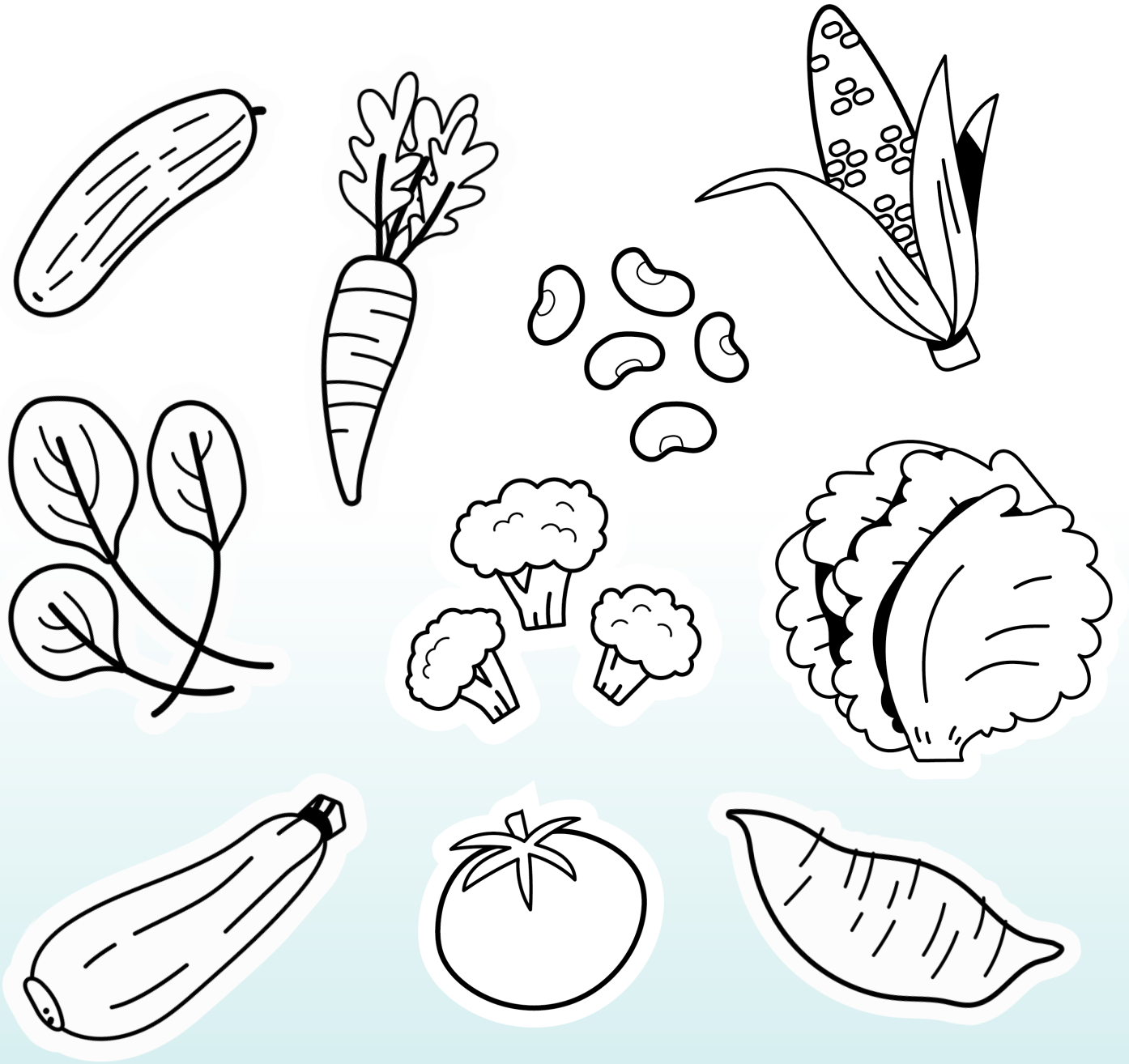
- Packages with added sauces or seasonings may have additional fat and calories.
- Rinse canned beans and vegetables with cold water to reduce sodium.
- Cut vegetables into smaller pieces to make them easier for your preschooler to eat.

Five Ways To Encourage Vegetables

1. **Eat together.** Let your child see you enjoying vegetables at meals and snacks.
2. **Prepare together.** Teach your child how to tear lettuce or add vegetable toppings to pizza.
3. **Get colorful.** Choose different colors of vegetables to eat.
4. **Make vegetables fun.** Read about them in books. Plant a seed and watch it grow.
5. **Share the adventure.** Shop for vegetables together. Try a new vegetable each week.

Activity

At child care, we offer different vegetables throughout the week. Ask your child to color the vegetables he or she has tried.



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Developing Healthy Habits With Less Sugar

Young children have small tummies, but big nutrition needs! Children often eat and drink too many added sugars, which are sugars and sweetening syrups that are added to foods or drinks when they are made.

Adults can help by making sure meals and snacks include foods and drinks that are lower in added sugars. This can help children learn to love a variety of flavors, not just what's sweet.

How Do I Find the Amount of Added Sugars in a Food?

Limit added sugars in your family's diet as much as possible by choosing foods and drinks that are lower in added sugars. You can find "Added Sugars" on the Nutrition Facts label on the food package. Children ages 2–4 years should get less than 25–35 grams (g) of added sugars per day. One 12-ounce can of soda, lemonade, or fruit drink has up to 60g of added sugars.

Use the **MyPlate Plan** to find an eating plan that is right for your child.

Total Sugars = Added Sugars + Naturally Occurring Sugars

Some foods naturally contain sugars. Examples include milk and fruits. These foods also provide important nutrients, like vitamins and minerals. Low-fat unflavored milk and fruits are part of a healthy eating pattern.

Top Sources of Added Sugars for Americans (age 1 and older)*

Sugar-Sweetened Beverages

Desserts and Sweet Snacks

Candy and Sugars

*Data Source: Analysis of What We Eat in America, NHANES, 2013-2016, ages 1 and older, 2 days dietary intake data, weighted.

Nutrition Facts

About 7 servings per container

Serving size **3/4 cup(170g)**

Amount per serving

Calories **130**

	% Daily Value*
Total Fat 0g	**0%**
Saturated Fat 0g	**0%**
Trans Fat 0g	
Cholesterol 10mg	**3%**
Sodium 60mg	**5%**
Total Carbohydrate 17g	**6%**
Dietary Fiber <1g	**3%**
Total Sugars 14g	

Includes 10g Added Sugars

What About Fruit Juice?

Most of the time, choose whole fruits (cut into thin slices or bite-size pieces to reduce the risk of choking in young children) instead of juice. While 100% fruit juice does not contain added sugars, juices lack the fiber that is found in whole or cut-up fruits. If your child does drink juice:

- Choose 100% juice.
- Offer a small serving, up to 4-6 fluid ounces (½–¾ cup) per day.

How Is Child Care Reducing Added Sugars?

We are working hard to make sure every bite counts at child care, so your child gets the nutrition needed to learn, play, and grow. We are offering:

- Cereals and yogurts that are lower in added sugars.
- Only unflavored milk to children 5 years old and younger.
- Grains that have fewer added sugars. For example, donuts, cookies, and pastries are not offered.
- Water to drink between meals.
- Non-food items, instead of sweets, to help celebrate successes.

Be a Taste Explorer

What tastes can you recognize? Color ones you have tried.