



What Children Really Need

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Good nutrition does not depend on a single food or a single meal. It is a continuous process of making good food choices over a period of time. A child's appetite is almost always the best guide to what is required for caloric intake. The parent is responsible for what a child is offered to eat, but the child is responsible for how much he or she eats. Make daily food choices using the Food Guide Pyramid and by reading food labels, but don't be alarmed if growing children do not eat as much as you think they should. Studies show that when children are hungry, they will eat what they need.

How Many Servings Do Young Children Need Each Day?

Based on recommendations by the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) and the National Institutes of Health, children need the following servings from each Pyramid group:

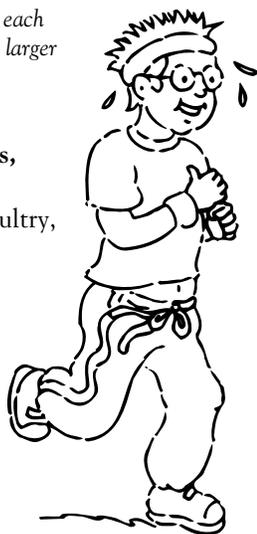
Bread, Cereal, Rice, & Pasta Group	6
Fruit & Vegetable Group	5
Milk, Yogurt, & Cheese Group	3
Meat, Poultry, Fish, Dry Beans, Eggs, & Nuts Group	2

Serving Sizes for Children

Offer 2- to 3-year-olds the lesser amounts of each serving size. Four- to 6-year-olds can eat the larger amounts.

Meat, Poultry, Fish, Dry Beans, Eggs, and Nuts:

- 2 to 6 tablespoons cooked meat, poultry, or fish
- 1/8 to 1/2 cup cooked beans
- 1 egg
- 1 to 2 tablespoons peanut butter

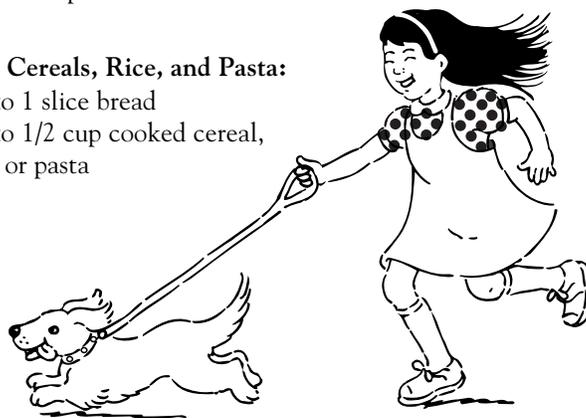


Fruits and Vegetables:

- 1/4 to 1 medium whole fruit
- 1/4 to 3/4 cup juice
- 1/8 to 1/2 cup canned fruit or cooked vegetable
- 1/4 to 1 cup tossed salad

Bread, Cereals, Rice, and Pasta:

- 1/2 to 1 slice bread
- 1/8 to 1/2 cup cooked cereal, rice, or pasta



Milk, Yogurt, and Cheese:

- 1 cup milk (1/2 to 3/4 cup portions)
- 8 ounces yogurt (1/2 to 3/4 cup portions)
- 1 to 2 ounces cheese

Variety Is Best

No one food provides all the nutrients needed to stay healthy, so it is best to eat a variety of foods every day. Using the Food Guide Pyramid can help you eat better.

Start with plenty of breads, cereals, rice, pasta, and fruits and vegetables. Add two to three servings from the milk, yogurt, and cheese group and two to three servings from the meat, poultry, fish, dry beans, eggs, and nuts group. Use fats, oils, and sweets in moderation.

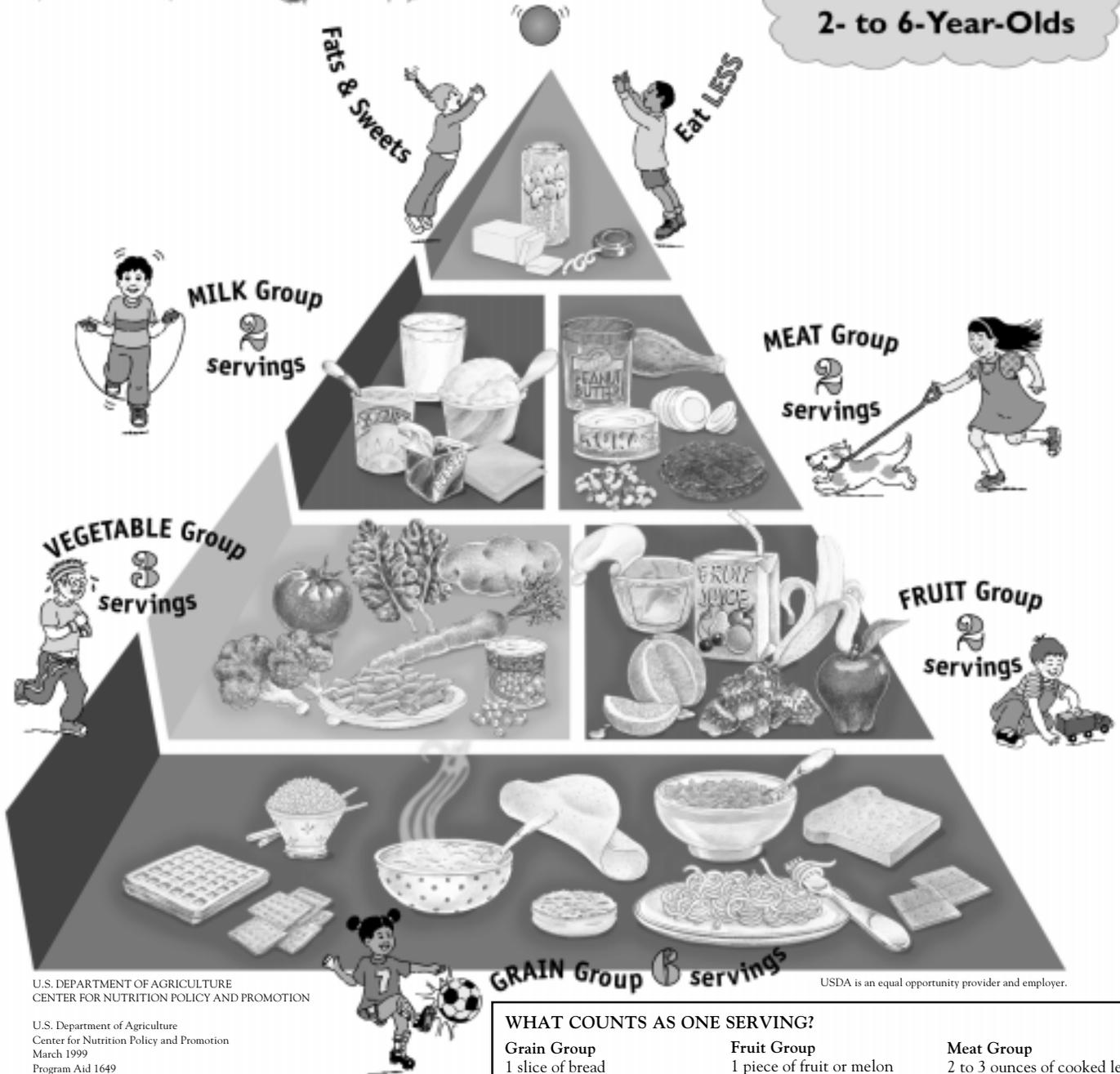
Water is vital to life and is part of all foods. Children should have at least 4 cups of fluid a day.

Fiber, found in plant foods, is often referred to as a carbohydrate. It helps keep the digestive tract functioning properly and may also help protect against some diseases. Good sources of fiber are whole grains, fruits, and vegetables.

FOOD Guide PYRAMID

for Young Children

A Daily Guide for
2- to 6-Year-Olds



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FOOD IS FUN and learning about food is fun, too. Eating foods from the Food Guide Pyramid and being physically active will help you grow healthy and strong.

WHAT COUNTS AS ONE SERVING?

Grain Group

1 slice of bread
1/2 cup of cooked rice or pasta
1/2 cup of cooked cereal
1 ounce of ready-to-eat cereal

Vegetable Group

1/2 cup of chopped raw or cooked vegetables
1 cup of raw leafy vegetables

Fruit Group

1 piece of fruit or melon wedge
3/4 cup of juice
1/2 cup of canned fruit
1/4 cup of dried fruit

Milk Group

1 cup of milk or yogurt
2 ounces of cheese

Meat Group

2 to 3 ounces of cooked lean meat, poultry, or fish
1/2 cup of cooked dry beans or 1 egg counts as 1 ounce of lean meat. 2 tablespoons of peanut butter count as 1 ounce of meat.

Fats and Sweets

Limit calories from these.

4- to 6-year-olds can eat these serving sizes. Offer 2- to 3-year-olds less, except for milk. 2- to 6-year-old children need a total of 2 servings from the milk group each day.

EAT a variety of **FOODS** and **ENJOY!**

Sugar, also often referred to as a carbohydrate, is a concentrated source of energy that rapidly growing children need. It also adds pleasure to eating. Research has shown no connection between sugar and obesity, but sugar does contribute to dental decay. The sugar in children's diets makes proper oral hygiene important. Raisins, for example, are a good snack, but they can stick to the teeth.

Protein supplies amino acids that help make the new body cells children need for growth. Foods high in protein include meat, poultry, fish, beans, eggs, nuts, and dairy products. These foods, along with fruits, vegetables, and grains, also provide vitamins and minerals that are involved in many body processes.

Fat is a concentrated source of energy that ounce for ounce provides about twice the calories of protein or carbohydrates. The American Academy of Pediatrics recommends that children eat 30 to 40 percent of their daily calories from fat. As children grow older, the daily calories from fat should remain around 30 percent or less.

Cholesterol, a fat-like substance found in animal foods, is needed by every cell in the body. Most experts agree that not all children need to limit cholesterol or have their blood levels tested. Children in families with a history of heart disease, however, are at increased risk and should be monitored more closely by their pediatricians.

Sodium is a mineral that makes up almost half of table salt. The connection between salt and high blood pressure is complicated, but moderate use during childhood does not appear to put children at risk. Since a taste for saltiness is learned, go easy on salt during cooking and at the table, and use salty snacks in moderation.

Snacks for Children over 2 Years of Age

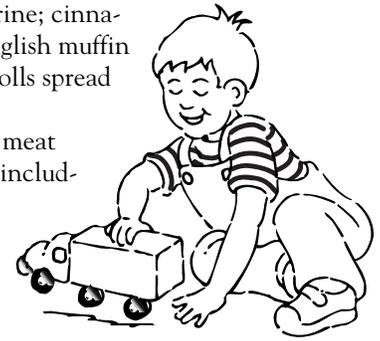
As children enter the preschool years, their appetites and stomachs are so small that they often cannot eat enough at regular meals to meet their daily caloric demands, so snacks are an important part of their food intake and need to be nutritious. A snack, however, does not have to be as large as a regular serving.

Here are some ideas for healthy snacks for your child:

- **Fresh fruit:** Apple wedges; orange, grapefruit, or tangerine slices (seedless, fresh, or canned); cantaloupe or watermelon chunks or balls; seedless grapes; pear or peach slices (fresh or canned); pineapple chunks (fresh or canned); strawberries; blueberries; blackberries; a banana; dried apples, apricots, peaches, or pears; pitted plums.
- **Raw vegetables:** Cucumber or turnip slices or sticks; celery or carrot sticks; cherry tomatoes cut in half; green pepper rings or sticks; cabbage wedges; cauliflower or broccoli florets; mushrooms; zucchini or summer squash strips or slices.
- **Unsweetened fruit and vegetable juices:** Apple, cranberry, grape, orange, grapefruit, pineapple, or tomato juice.
- **Breads and cereals:** Unsweetened dry cereals; saltine, round, or whole-grain crackers; pretzels; breadsticks;

toasted bread with margarine; cinnamon toast; pizza slices; English muffin halves; split and toasted rolls spread with peanut butter.

- **Protein foods:** Sandwich meat roll-ups*; canned meats* including meat sticks such as Vienna sausages and Spam or Treet in cubes; chicken, ham, or tuna salad fillings for small sandwiches or celery sticks; smooth peanut butter spread on a small slice of bread, crackers, celery, banana, or apple; hard-cooked eggs. (*These foods are high in sodium and fat and should be used in moderation.)
- **Milk and dairy products:** Milk or chocolate milk; yogurt; cheese cubes or slices (use mild flavors); cottage cheese; ice cream (not flavored ice on a stick).



Food Safety for Children

Food safety issues are important for preschoolers because their immune systems are not yet fully developed.

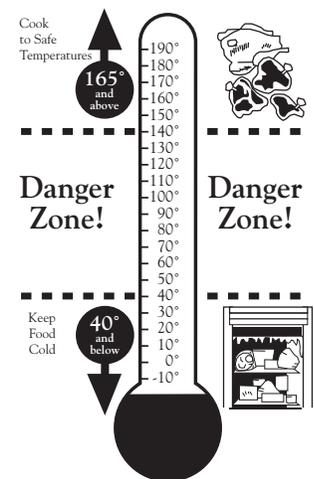
Learning proper food handling techniques can help prevent harmful bacteria from growing in food and causing food-borne illness (flu-like symptoms associated with poor sanitation). When preparing and storing food, you should follow correct refrigeration and cooking temperatures. Cooking foods to safe temperatures and keeping cold food cold can keep food out of the danger zone where bacteria can grow rapidly. You should also follow proper handwashing techniques and follow these other helpful tips:

Hot Foods

- Cook all food thoroughly.
- Use a meat thermometer.
- Cook all meats until juices run clear. Do not allow children to handle raw ground beef or poultry.
- Leftovers should be reheated to a minimum of 140°F.

Cold Foods

- Refrigerate chilled or frozen foods promptly after purchasing.
- Thaw frozen foods in the refrigerator, not on the counter.



Adapted from *Applied Foodservice & Sanitation*, The Educational Foundation of the National Restaurant Association, 1992.

- Refrigerate leftovers within two hours after cooking or serving.
- Place leftovers in small, shallow covered dishes for quick cooling.
- Throw out food that is left at room temperature for more than two hours.

In the Kitchen

- Children and adults should always wash their hands with hot, soapy water before, during, and after handling food.
- Wash all produce (grapes, apples, etc.) before eating.
- Wash all food utensils and surfaces with hot, soapy water.
- Sanitize all surfaces with a solution of 2 capfuls of household bleach in 1 gallon of warm water. Rinse the dishcloth you are using often in the solution, and change dishcloths often. Discard the sanitary solution daily.
- Cover or wrap all foods, and label and date them for storage.

References

The Food Guide Pyramid, Home and Garden Bulletin #252, USDA, 1992.

The American Dietetic Association's Complete Food & Nutrition Guide, Roberta Duyff, 1996.

Eat Smart: A Guide to Good Health, John McDougall, 1997.

Applied Foodservice & Sanitation, The Educational Foundation of the National Restaurant Association, 1992.

The Joy of Snacks, Nancy Cooper, 1991.

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