

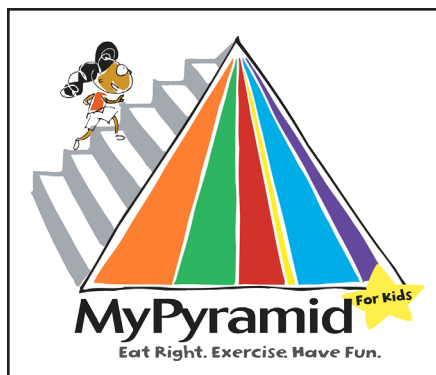
The Daily Parent

A NEWSLETTER FOR WORKING PARENTS

DELICIOUS AND NUTRITIOUS:

Helping Children Make Healthy Food Choices

Today, we know and understand the importance of a healthy diet. Even fast food restaurants that once offered only fried and fatty foods, now include healthier selections on their menus, such as fruits, raisins, salads, and milk as well.









amounts of food children and adults should have each day as part of a 'healthy' food balance. The food pyramid is divided into six food groups: grains, vegetables, fruits, milk, meat and beans, and oils. The amounts and portion servings are based on your age. The pyramid model has undergone

Healthy (and not so healthy) eating habits begin in childhood. Parents who serve nutritious foods are also teaching their children to make good food choices now and in the future. Young children who start off eating the "right" foods can avoid long-term health problems, such as diabetes, high cholesterol, heart disease, and obesity later in life. So, what are the right foods and how much of them should children eat?

changes over the past few years to include more variety in the amounts and types of foods suggested for a healthy diet. It also takes into account that different cultures have different kinds of foods that are also part of a healthy diet.

A Balanced Diet

You may have heard of the food pyramid. The pyramid is a guideline for the types and

The food groups and examples of food in each group	
	Grains: bread, cereal, crackers, pasta
	Vegetables: spinach, carrots, green beans, cucumbers
	Fruits: apples, berries, oranges, bananas
	Milk: cheese, milk, yogurt
	Meat & Beans: chicken, beans, peanut butter, eggs
	Oils: butter, oil, some nuts

In This Issue

The Nutrient Mix	2
What about Babies	2
Junk Food	2
Children are Often Picky Eaters	3
Spicing it Up: Fun Nutritious Meals for Your Child	3
For More Information	4

Once your child is around 2 years or so, he will be eating from most of the food groups. As he grows older, his food groups and choices will grow. According to Kids

Health, a good guideline for what toddlers should eat each day is:

- ▶ 3 servings of grains (a serving is 1/2 slice of bread, or a few tablespoons of rice, pasta, or infant cereal)
- ▶ 2 servings of dairy (a serving is a cup of milk or yogurt, 1-1/2 oz of cheese)
- ▶ 2 servings of protein (a serving is 1-2 tbsp of meat, one egg)
- ▶ 2 servings of fruit (a serving is 2-4 tbsp)
- ▶ 3 servings of vegetables (a serving is 2-4 tbsp cooked)

Don't worry if your toddler doesn't eat the same amount every day, or doesn't eat this much—every child is different. If you do have any concerns, talk to your child's doctor.

Of course as your child grows, she will eat more. Speak with your pediatrician to learn about the recommended amounts of food for your child's age, or find out more from the resources section at the end this issue.

The Nutrient Mix

One of the reasons it's important to follow the food pyramid is because many foods include key nutrients. Four key nutrients your child should eat are:

1. **Protein:** found in milk, meat, eggs, and beans—toddlers and preschoolers should eat around .5 grams per pound of body weight;
2. **Fiber:** Found in fruits and vegetables—6-8 grams/day;
3. **Calcium:** Found in milk, cheese, leafy green vegetables, fish and other sources—children need 500 mg/day, which is usually fulfilled by eating two servings of dairy; and

4. **Iron:** Found in iron-fortified cereals, spinach and other leafy green vegetables, and red meat—toddlers should eat around 7 mg/day.

What about Babies?

For the first year of life, your baby will mostly get the nutrients and calories needed from milk—either breast milk or formula. At about 6 months, you can start feeding him iron-fortified infant cereal, fruits and vegetables in small amounts, but make sure the food is soft and mushy and can be eaten without much chewing.

Once your baby is 9 or 10 months old, you can feed her small amounts of meat and grains. Talk to your pediatrician to find out exactly how much you should feed her. At around age 1, you can transition your baby from breast milk or formula to cow's milk. (Note: some babies are allergic to cow's milk. If your baby seems fussy after drinking cow's milk or shows other symptoms, talk to your doctor.)

Offer these healthy alternatives as snacks

If your child likes . . .	Try . . .
Soda	▶ Milk or a fruit juice with no sugar added
Chips	▶ Chopped up veggies or other celery
Candy	▶ Melon slices, kiwi, tangerines, or other fruits ▶ Nuts (if your child is older) ▶ Cheese

Junk Food

Some foods are nutrient-rich and have the necessary vitamins and materials we need to maintain our health. But "junk foods" such as chips, candy, sweets, and soda are

Helping Children Make Healthy Food Choices

not nutritious. These types of foods (that we all seem to love) are “empty calories.” Some of these in a normal diet are okay, occasionally. However, it’s a good idea to try to limit your child’s consumption of these foods.

Children are Often Picky Eaters

Even if you have the best ideas in mind, your child still might not want eat all the healthy food choices you serve. In fact, most toddlers are “picky eaters”—they don’t automatically like new food.

Here are some strategies for how to deal with picky eaters:

- ▶ **If at first you don’t succeed, try, try again:** Children don’t always like foods the first time. In fact, some children may need to try a food 10 or 15 times before they will enjoy it. And, no one likes every food.
- ▶ **Pick the right portion:** For a new food, a little bite or two is enough. There’s no need to expect your child to dig right into a whole helping of spinach the first time.
- ▶ **Don’t bribe them:** If you tell your child that she can have a cookie if she finishes the broccoli, it will only reinforce the idea that broccoli is bad, and cookies are good.
- ▶ **Offer a choice:** Let your child choose from a selection of healthy foods you have available. For instance, offer her a choice between carrots and corn for her vegetable.
- ▶ **Don’t force it:** If your child doesn’t want to eat the food, don’t make him eat it. Sometimes you won’t win, and that’s okay.
- ▶ **Be a good role model:** If your child sees you eating different healthy foods, she will model your behavior. If possible, try to get the family to eat together at mealtimes.

Try these ideas for making mealtimes a bit more creative:

Breakfast	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Toast with a Face: Use cream cheese, slices of strawberry, blueberries and other fruits to draw a face on toasted bread. ▶ Breakfast Smoothie: Blend low-fat yogurt with fruit to make a tasty, drinkable breakfast.
Lunch	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Silly Sandwiches: Use cookie cutters to make sandwiches in fun shapes. ▶ Cold-cut Roll Ups: Instead of a sandwich, take lunch meat, cheese slices, and a tortilla and roll them up together.
Dinner	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Mini Pizzas: Use the usual ingredients and toppings, but a bagel for the crust. ▶ Breakfast for Dinner: Serve waffles or omelets at dinner time.
Snack	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Ants on a Log: Celery with peanut butter and raisins. ▶ Frozen Juice Popsicles: Freeze no-sugar added natural juice in ice-cube containers, add toothpicks or popsicle sticks.

Spicing it Up: Fun, Nutritious Meals for Your Child

We all have to eat, but there are no rules that say we always have to eat the same things the same way. Experiment with food and make it fun. Have your child help you prepare food. The more involved they are in preparing food, the more likely they will want to eat it.

Eating nutritious foods will help your child’s overall development – of course physically, but also emotionally and mentally. Good, healthy foods help children to think better, have more energy and sleep better as well. It does the same for adults. We all feel better when we eat better. Your child watches everything you do, so when you eat healthy foods, she will want to as well.

Make eating healthy a family tradition. Try eating meals as a family, even if it is only once a day. Having your meals together is

Helping Children Make Healthy Food Choices

not only a good way of sharing food, but it's a good way to build relationships with your children.

For More Information:

- ▶ Learn about the **United States' Department of Agriculture's Food Pyramid** at <http://www.mypyramid.gov/>. Children with experience on the internet can also visit http://www.mypyramid.gov/kids/kids_game.html for an interactive game on the food pyramid.
- ▶ **KidsHealth**, www.kidshealth.org, provides doctor-approved health information about children from before birth through adolescence. Created by The Nemours Foundation's Center for Children's Health Media, KidsHealth provides families with accurate, up-to-date, and jargon-free health information they can use, including nutrition information for young children.

- ▶ **Sesame Street Workshop's Healthy Habits Resource Kit**, www.sesameworkshop.org/healthyhabits, is designed for child care providers to help them integrate nutrition and physical activity into their programs. The Sesame Street Workshop page also features research-based articles and tips on children's nutrition and recipes.
- ▶ **The American Academy of Pediatrics**, www.aap.org/healthtopics/nutrition.cfm, has a section on their parenting corner pages on nutrition for children. A variety of topics is covered from how to feed a difficult child to information on breastfeeding.

The Daily Parent is prepared by NACCRRA, The National Association of Child Care Resource & Referral Agencies, with funding from the Citi Foundation, New York, New York. © 2008 NACCRRA. All Rights Reserved. #468-0606



Citi Foundation

