



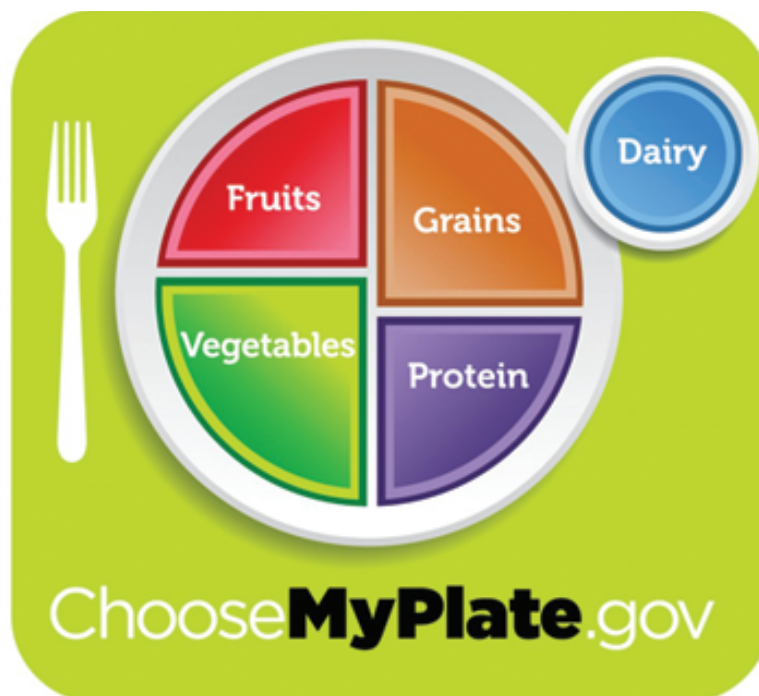
# How Much Do Young Children Need to Eat?

Amounts vary depending on the age and activity level of a child. Each day, offer young children 3 meals and 2 or 3 snacks. Since their stomachs are small, they need to eat more often.

Use the table below to plan meals and snacks for children 3 to 5 years old. A range of amounts is listed since younger children may eat less than older children; very active children may eat more than less active children. Some experts suggest a portion to be one tablespoon for every year of age; however, again, this can vary with activity and is merely a general guideline.

Offer young children small portions, especially of new foods or previously rejected foods. They can always ask for more, if there is extra. A child may need many times of seeing, smelling, and tasting a food before her or she learns to like it. Allow children to refuse food politely, and eat as much or as little as they want of foods offered.

The USDA released MyPlate in 2011 to help remind adults and children to choose healthy foods for healthy meals.





# Recommended Daily Amounts of Food for Young Children 3 to 5 Years Old from the U.S. Department of Agriculture

This table outlines the USDA recommendations from the USDA for children 3 to 5 years of age. Suggestions are included to help clarify these recommendations. Each day, provide 3 meals and 2 or 3 snacks to young children. "Offer a variety of foods from several food groups by offering small portions that add up to the total daily amounts"

Food Group	Recommended total daily amounts for 3 to 5 year olds:	How to meet the recommendations:
Grains	<p>A total of 3 to 5 ounce equivalents each day divided into small portions</p> <p>1 ounce equiv. = 1 slice of bread</p>	<p>Recommendations can be met by offering small portions of grains at most meals and snacks each day. Examples of a small portion: <math>\frac{1}{2}</math> piece of toast at breakfast, a few crackers at snack.</p> <p>The following may be substituted for 1 slice of bread (1 ounce): <math>\frac{1}{2}</math> cup spaghetti, macaroni, noodles, corn grits, or rice; 5 small crackers; <math>\frac{1}{2}</math> English muffin or bagel; 1 small tortilla; or 1 cup ready-to-eat cereal.</p> <p>Offer whole grains for at least half of the grain portions. Examples: 100% whole wheat bread, oatmeal cereals, brown rice, bulgur, or corn tortillas.</p>
Vegetables	<p>A total of 1 to <math>1\frac{1}{2}</math> cups each day divided into small portions</p>	<p>Recommendations can be met by offering small portions of vegetables at meals and snacks each day. Examples: <math>\frac{1}{4}</math> cup cooked carrot slices at lunch, some raw broccoli with dip for snacks. Tasty dip ideas include low-fat ranch dressing or hummus.</p> <p>Aim to include at least one dark green vegetable such as broccoli, spinach, or a dark green leafy vegetable every day. Include orange or deep yellow vegetable such as carrots, winter squash, or sweet potatoes several days a week. Cooked dry beans such as pinto or chickpeas are also good choices.</p>



Fruits	A total of 1 to 1½ cups each day divided into small portions	<p>Recommendations can be met by offering small portions of fruit at meals and snacks each day.            Examples: a few pear slices for lunch, a handful of sliced grapes at snack.</p> <p>Fresh, frozen, canned, or dried fruits all count towards meeting fruit goals. Fruits canned in juice or water do not have added sugar and therefore are better choices than those in heavy syrup.            Offer pieces of fruit most of the time. Limit fruit juice to about ½ cup of 100% fruit juice each day.* Offer water if your child is thirsty between meals.</p>
Milk, Yogurt, Cheese	2 - 2½ cups each day divided into small portions	<p>Recommendations can be met by offering milk-based foods at meals and snacks each day.            Examples: ½ cup milk with each meal, yogurt or cheese at snack.</p> <p>The following may be substituted for ½ cup milk: ¾ to 1 oz. cheese, ½ cup yogurt.            Offer young children milk or a dairy food at every meal. Most milk group choices should be low-fat or fat-free for children over 2 years of age. Talk to your health care provider if your child has a milk intolerance.</p>
Meat, poultry, fish, dry beans, eggs, and nuts	A total of 2 to 5 ounce equivalents each day divided into small portions	<p>Recommendations can be met by offering small portions of protein-rich foods at meals and snacks each day.            Examples: 1 egg at breakfast, 2 slices of turkey at lunch, a small lean hamburger at dinner.</p> <p>The following may be substituted for 1 ounce of lean meat, fish, or poultry: 1 egg, 1 tablespoon peanut butter, or ¼ cup cooked dry beans. Be careful of choking hazards with peanut butter and nuts. Talk to your health care provider if your child has a nut allergy.</p>

\*The American Academy of Pediatrics states that fruit juice should be limited to 4 to 6 ounces each day (about half the fruit group amount) for children 6 months to 6 years of age.



# Plan for Variety

Food variety is key for everyone's health. Each day at meals and snacks offer foods from many food groups. Throughout the week, offer different choices within each food group.

For each meal, offer 4 to 6 foods:

- One or 2 foods from the grain group
- One or 2 foods from the fruit and vegetable groups
- Always one from the milk, yogurt, cheese group
- One food from the meat, fish, bean, egg group

For each snack, offer variety by including 2 or 3 foods from different food groups, such as crackers and cheese, apple wedges with yogurt dip, an oatmeal cookie with apple slices, or leftovers from lunch or dinner. If you offer mostly healthful foods and model your own enjoyment of these foods, then children will learn to choose and eat healthful foods.

Note to parents:

Talk with your health care provider about your child's growth chart, so you can be assured that he or she is developing in a healthful pattern.





# Tips for Feeding Young Children

Whether you are a parent or child care professional, keep mealtime low key and enjoyable for everyone while helping children develop healthful eating habits for life.

## Ideas to make mealtime pleasant

Be sure young children are seated and comfortable at the table. Provide child-size forks and spoons and adjust a child's seating as necessary.

Prior to mealtime, let children know what behaviors are expected and be consistent in encouraging good behaviors. Don't set the bar too high; each child will develop skills at his/her own pace. A good rule is no TV at meal times.

Avoid power struggles. Encourage children to taste the foods offered but do not force or bribe them to eat.

Discourage dawdling by taking plates away after 20 to 30 minutes with the comment, "eating time is over for now." On the other hand, don't hurry meals. 3 to 5 year olds should be able to sit at a table for 20 minutes. Meals and snacks nourish children but are also important as social times.

Let children help with cooking, set-up, and clean-up. Being a part of the "kitchen team" can promote positive attitudes toward food and eating. For example, a 3 year old might help set the table with napkins and utensils and a 5 year old might scrub the potatoes.

Encourage children to eat a variety of healthy foods

Sit with children and eat the same foods they do. Research shows that positive adult companionship at meals and snacks improves young children's eating habits.

Encourage, but do not make children taste every food. It may take many times before a child tries a food and learns to like it. Forcing a child to eat may cause the child to dislike the food even more.

Avoid bribing children with dessert or other rewards to get them to eat a particular food such as vegetables. Bribing results in them liking dessert even more and vegetables even less.

Let children judge their own hunger and fullness

Allow children to serve themselves whenever possible. Encourage small "first portions," reassuring children that they can have "seconds" if they are still hungry and there is food left.

Let children judge their own hunger and fullness. It's okay to eat very little at one meal and a lot at another. Researchers are finding that the clean-your-plate rule can lead to children ignoring their internal signals to stop eating when they are full. Also, do not comment or praise on how much or how little a child is eating.



# Develop Healthy Food Relationships with Children\*

The above tips can also be expressed in terms of the roles of adults and children in daily feeding and eating. Most health and nutrition experts agree on the following suggestions.

Adults who care for young children should:

- Provide meals and snacks at regular intervals.
- Provide a variety of healthy choices.
- Eat with children and model healthy habits and polite manners.
- Let children eat as much or as little as they want of foods offered.
- Encourage; don't bribe or bargain.
- Repeatedly offer previously rejected foods.
- Accept that a child may not like some foods.
- Remain calm at mealtimes.

Young children should learn to:

- Respond to their hunger and fullness signals.
- Grow to eat independently and without fuss.
- Sit without disturbing others at the table.
- Pick and choose from foods offered.
- Eventually taste a variety of foods.
- Refuse food politely.

\* Resources in this area include books by Ellyn Satter, USDA publications, Cooperative Extension publications, and *Guide to Your Child's Nutrition* (1999, American Academy of Pediatrics).



# Choking Caution\*

Always watch children during meals and snacks. Young children ages 2 to 3 especially are at risk of choking on food and remain at risk until they can chew and swallow better at or around age 4. Foods that may cause choking includes:

- frankfurters
- nuts and seeds
- popcorn
- raw carrots
- chunks of meat
- raisins
- marshmallows
- peanut butter (spoonful)
- chips
- whole grapes
- pretzels
- round or hard candy
- raw celery
- cherries with pits
- large pieces of fruit

\* USDA recommendations, 1999