

Healthy Eating for Young Children

Healthy eating provides the nutrients that children need to grow and develop. It teaches them to enjoy a variety of foods and helps form healthy habits that will last a lifetime.



FEEDING BASICS:

- Offer a variety of healthy foods from the four food groups of Canada's Food Guide.
- Serve 3 meals and 2-3 snacks each day.
- Provide small portions (1/4 - 1/2 of an "adult" serving).
- Give only water between meals and snacks.
- Trust your child to decide how much to eat.
- Don't pressure to eat more or clean their plate.
- Keep in mind: it is normal for appetite to vary from day-to-day.
- Eat the same meal together. You are an important role model — let your child see you enjoying healthy foods.

Breakfast	Oatmeal, banana slices and 1/2 cup milk
Snack	Whole grain crackers, peanut butter or hummus and water
Lunch	Pasta, tomato sauce, apple slices and 1/2 cup milk
Snack	Dry cereal (whole grain), yogurt and water
Supper	Chicken, brown rice, broccoli, fruit salad and 1/2 cup milk
Snack	Canned peaches and 1/2 cup milk

FEEDING CHALLENGES:

Wanting the same food all the time

Keep offering a variety of healthy choices along with their favourite food. The more times your child is exposed to other foods and watches you eating them, the more likely they will be to eat them too.

Refusing certain foods

Be patient and try preparing foods in different ways. Try serving foods in soups and stews or with dips and sauces.

Becoming independent

Children need to learn to recognize when they are hungry and when they are full. Although it can be hard, parents need to let children explore their food and trust them to decide how much to eat at each meal. It's ok if they decide not to eat a meal or snack once in a while.

Milk

- Provide 2 cups (500 ml) of milk each day.
- Whole (3.25%) cow's milk can be started at 9-12 months of age.
- At age 2, switch to the milk or fortified soy beverage that the rest of the family drinks (e.g. skim, 1%, 2%).

Water

- Serve when your child is thirsty between meals.
- Serve more often if the weather is hot or if your child is very active.

Juice

- Children do not need to drink any juice.
- If you do offer juice, use 100% unsweetened juice and limit to 1/2 cup (125 ml, 4 oz) per day.

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