

FEEDING YOUR PRESCHOOLER



STAFF NOTES

SMART CHOICES FOR FEEDING PRESCHOOLERS

Why Is This Important?

- Many parents worry they are not feeding their preschooler enough. But serving sizes for preschoolers are smaller than serving sizes for adults and each child is different. Your role is to provide healthy choices for your preschooler and let them decide how much they want to eat. The information on the front is provided as a guide to help you gauge how much average preschoolers consume.

Nutritional Information

- At this age, children can begin to serve themselves. Family-style dining encourages appropriate serving sizes and trying new foods.
- Did you know that it's normal for a growing preschooler to have 1 to 2 snacks every day? Make snack time healthy to help your child get all the nutrients he needs.
- Serving sizes for preschoolers are much smaller than serving sizes for adults. A serving of fruits or veggies is about ½ cup. A ½ cup for milk is a serving size for a preschooler.

Common Challenges

- Picky eating frustrates and discourages many parents. It's normal for toddlers to go through a picky eating phase. As toddlers grow into preschoolers, however, this phase can turn into a habit. It can be frustrating, but with time, hard work, and patience these habits can be changed.
- Be patient. Your child is learning what he likes and what he doesn't—and his tastes can (and will!) change very quickly.
- When you are dealing with a picky eater:
 - Stay calm when your child won't eat what you prepared. Don't try to force him to eat.
 - Offer new foods with familiar foods that you know your child likes.
 - Let your child choose between two healthy options. He's more likely to eat something if he chooses it himself.
 - Try not to use your child's favorite food as a reward for good behavior.

Helpful tips

- Preschoolers are often very curious about learning new things and fun facts. You can use this to help him learn about new foods. For example, you can:
 - Let your child help with food shopping, preparation, and serving. The more you involve him in the process, the more likely he'll be to try the foods.
 - Preschoolers are at the perfect age to learn about how food grows. Plant vegetables and herbs with your child—he will love to try the foods he grows!
- Talk to your child about what other kids like to eat. If a friend really likes a food that your child has not tried, use this as an opportunity to try a new food.

Mealtime with Preschoolers

- Encourage your preschooler to try small amounts of food at mealtimes.
- Try using child-sized dishes and utensils for accurate portions.
- Allow your preschooler to tell you when he is full. Don't worry if it seems he didn't eat enough this time. He will eat when he is hungry.
- Try to keep a routine with meals and snacks. This helps to limit all-day grazing and makes it easier to say 'no' when your preschooler asks for food outside of meal and snack time.

Beverage Choices

- Milk and water are still the healthiest choices for your preschooler.
- Eat whole fruits instead of drinking juice. Offer cut up bananas, strawberries, grapes, or other fun finger foods.
- Healthy choices away from home
 - Teach your child to ask other adults for milk or water when she's not at home.
 - If you are out together and only juice, soda pop, or sports drinks are available, give her tap water.
 - If you decide to allow some juice or punch at a party, mix in some water so that it's less sugary.