Feeding Guide for Young Children

Offer three meals and two to three healthy snacks daily

	1 – 3 Years:	4 – 6 Years:	Tips
Grains *Focus on whole grains*	**3 ounces** Bread: ½ slice; cooked/dry cereal: ¼ cup; crackers: two to three; pasta: ¼ cup	**4 – 5 ounces** Bread: one slice; cooked/dry cereal: ½ cup; crackers: four to five, pasta: ½ cup	These foods provide fiber and are needed for growth and development.
Veggies *Pick a variety of colors*	**1 cup** 2 – 3 tbsp. cooked, 1/4 cup fresh	**1 ½ cups** 3 – 4 tbsp. cooked, 1/3 cup fresh	These foods provide fiber and help your child develop good eyesight and healthy skin and hair.
Fruits *Choose whole fruits, limit juice to ½ cup per day*	**1 cup** ¼ - ½ medium fruit, ¼ cup canned, 1-2 tbsp. dried	**1 ½ cups** ½ medium fruit, ¾ cup canned, 2 tbsp. dried	These foods help prevent infections.
Meat, Poultry, Fish, Beans, Eggs	**2 ounces** 1 ounce meat or meat equivalent	**3 – 4 ounces** 1 – 2 ounces meat or meat equivalent	These foods are a good source of protein and iron.
Milk, Yogurt, Cheese	**2 cups** ½ cup milk or yogurt, ½ ounce cheese Talk to your health care provider about reduced-fat products.	**2 cups** ¾ cup milk or yogurt, 1 ounce cheese You may choose low-fat or fat-free products.	These foods keep bones and teeth strong.

** Remember: Candy, jam, syrups, soft drinks, cakes, cookies, pies, chips, etc., provide lots of calories with few nutrients. This can lead to obesity. Butter, margarine and other oils should be used sparingly.*

** The recommended amounts in the chart are the DAILY recommended amounts.*

Tips

- Meals should provide at least a grain, fruit or veggie, and protein.
- Snacks are mini meals that include at least two food groups.
- Encourage children to drink water between meals. Sports drinks are not recommended for children.

Portions

1 tablespoon = same size as your first knuckle

½ cup cooked vegetables or pasta = same size as one cupped hand

Mealtime

Twelve months of age is a good time to start a meal and snack-time routine. Because children have small tummies, they will need three meals and two to three healthy snacks daily of a variety of foods from all of the food groups. When introducing a new food, it may take up to 10 tries before a child will taste or eat that food.

Reward and Punishment for Eating

Try not to use rewards for eating: "If you eat all your beans, you can have ice cream."

Try not to use punishment for not eating: "If you don't eat your meat, you won't get anything to eat until tomorrow."

- Saying this can make mealtime stressful for children
- Avoid the "clean your plate" rule. We want children to listen to their bodies and stop eating when they are full. This is called self-regulation. Continuing to eat when our bodies have told us to stop leads to obesity.
- For more information, look for "Children's Nutrition Guidelines" at AveraChildrens.org

Allergies

If you have a family history of food allergies, be sure to consult with your medical provider before introducing foods with a higher likelihood of allergy such as peanut butter, nuts and nut products, fish, shellfish, and eggs.

Children and Choking

Any food can cause choking, so always supervise your child during mealtimes. Learn the Heimlich maneuver for infant and child choking. The American Academy of Pediatrics provides education on how to perform the Heimlich maneuver at healthychildren.org.

Be cautious with foods that have a high choking potential: grapes (should be cut into small pieces), large marshmallows, hard candy, hot dogs (should be cut in small pieces), popcorn and peanuts. The American Academy of Pediatrics recommends not feeding these foods to children under the age of 4. Teach your child to take small bites and eat slowly.

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PTED-207307-ML

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