

Steps Towards Lifelong Healthy Eating

Introduction

Feeding a child can be quite a challenge. Developing and maintaining healthy eating choices is a lifelong endeavor. The United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) has developed *MyPyramid* guidelines to be used in preparing meals and snacks for all ages greater than 1 year of age. Good and bad nutrition habits begin at home. Individual food preferences and hectic schedules often leave a parent wondering what to do at mealtime. High calorie, highly processed convenience foods are often an easy option. Although many things influence what children eat, adults are still the most important role models when developing healthy eating and lifestyle habits. This brochure is intended to assist children, adolescents, and families practice healthy eating behaviors and gain more knowledge for optimal nutrition.



Nutrition for infants

Good nutrition is needed for the rapid growth and development that occurs during the first year of life. The American Academy of Pediatrics recommends breastfeeding until your baby is one year old. Breast milk is

preferred over formula for newborns because it strengthens the immune system and is easier to digest. However, if breastfeeding is not possible, infant formulas do have the nutrients your baby needs to grow.

Birth to 4 months

- ◆ Offer breast milk or iron-fortified formula (until one year of age).
- ◆ Feed on demand.
- ◆ Pay close attention to your baby's hunger cues, such as the rooting reflex, chewing or sucking on hands or fingers or crying.
- ◆ Let your baby decide how much formula he or she needs at each feeding. Do not expect the bottle to be emptied at every feed
- ◆ Breastfed and formula fed babies may cluster feed. This means they will eat more frequently during certain parts of the day. Do not be alarmed about this, but continue to pay close attention to their hunger cues.
- ◆ Expect your baby's appetite to vary from day to day.
- ◆ Your baby may be hungry 8 to 12 times each day and may drink 21 to 24 ounces each day

If you are breastfeeding, talk to your baby's doctor about giving Vitamin D supplements to your baby by the time your baby is 2 weeks old.

Watch for these new skills:

- ◆ Sitting with support
- ◆ Holding small objects in his or her hand

- ◆ Holding his or her head steady.
- ◆ Roll from back to side

4 to 6 months

Continue to offer formula and/or breast milk.

Your baby may cut back to 4 to 6 times each day (or more than 6 times each day) and may drink 24 to 32 ounces each day. Offer iron fortified infant cereal mixed with breast milk or formula to a thin consistency between 4 and 6 months, **but preferably not until 6 months.**

Start with rice cereal, followed by the addition of oatmeal and then barley cereal. Do not put the cereal in the bottle unless directed by your doctor. If your child does not start an iron fortified cereal by 6 months, consult your doctor about starting an iron supplement or introduce strained meat.

Watch for these new skills:

- ◆ Standing up with help.
- ◆ Lifting head to 90 degrees.
- ◆ Reaching for objects.
- ◆ Rolling over in both directions.

6 to 8 months



- ◆ Continue to offer breast milk or formula.
- ◆ Your baby may be hungry up to 4 to 6 times each day and may eat and drink 24 to 32 ounces each day.
- ◆ Add pureed fruits, vegetables, yogurt and strained meats.
- ◆ Introduce one food at a time and

wait three to four days before introducing each new food. Watch for allergic reactions such as a rash, hives, vomiting or diarrhea. Always introduce single foods and avoid mixed fruits, vegetable and dinners until your baby has had every food in the combination by itself. If there is a strong history of food allergies in your family, ask your baby's doctor to recommend when those foods should be introduced.

- ◆ Practice cup drinking by offering water (or diluted juice) from a cup. (Avoid orange juice for now.) Ask your baby's doctor if a fluoride or iron supplement is necessary for your baby.

Watch for these new skills:

- ◆ Can sit unsupported.
- ◆ Holding small objects in his or her hand.
- ◆ Passing objects from hand to hand
- ◆ Eating with an up-and-down munching movement.

(continued on page 2)

Healthy Eating - 2 (continued from page 1)

8 to 10 months



- ◆ Continue to offer breast milk and/or formula.
- ◆ Your baby may be hungry up to 4 to 6 times each day and may eat and drink 24 to 32 ounces each day
- ◆ Continue to offer rice cereal, pureed fruits and vegetables
- ◆ Continue to offer strained meats and add mashed cooked (dry) beans.
- ◆ Add finger foods such as:
 - ◆ Toast.
 - ◆ Cooked noodles.
 - ◆ Crackers.
 - ◆ Cooked rice.
 - ◆ Soft fruit, such as bananas or pears.
 - ◆ Cooked vegetables.
 - ◆ Cheese.

Watch for these new skills

- ◆ Biting into foods.
- ◆ Using finger and thumb to grab.
- ◆ Drinking from a cup with help

10 to 12 months

- ◆ Continue to offer breast milk and/or formula.
- ◆ Your baby may be hungry up to 6 times each day and may eat and drink 24 to 32 ounces each day.
- ◆ Continue to offer the foods listed under the section for 8 to 10 months
- ◆ Offer mashed foods that your family is eating. Decrease the amount of mashed or strained foods as you increase the amount of finger foods.
- ◆ Your baby should still eat 1/4 cup of iron-fortified cereal each day
- ◆ Your baby should also be given 1/4 cup to 1/2 cup of soft, cooked vegetables each day. Include a dark orange or dark green vegetable at least three times a week.
- ◆ Give your baby 1/2 cup to 3/4 cup fruits each day. Water (or diluted juice) may be offered in a cup.
- ◆ Feed your baby two 2 to four 4 tablespoons of protein foods daily.
- ◆ Some mothers also begin weaning their children from breast or bottle to a cup at about one year of age. • When weaning, gradually drop one bottle feeding or nursing at a time. Allow four to five days to pass before dropping the next bottle-feeding or nursing time
- ◆ Limit fruit juice to less than 4 ounces each day. Juice is not an essential liquid and you can decide not to give juice at all.

Watch for new skills:

- ◆ Drinking from a cup.
- ◆ Coordinating hand-eye movements.
- ◆ Holding and using a spoon.

Foods to avoid

Avoid the following foods until after your baby's first birthday, because of the possibility of an allergic reaction, because your child's digestive system is not mature enough to handle these foods or because they do not provide adequate nutrition:

- ◆ Chocolate.
- ◆ Egg whites.
- ◆ Cow's milk.

If your family has a history of food allergies, consult your doctor on when to introduce these foods.

Avoid honey in the first year of life because it can contain spores that can cause botulism poisoning.

Avoid peanut butter until after age two.

Avoid whole peanuts and tree nuts until 3 years of age because they are a choking hazard.

General guidelines for healthy eating habits for children ages 1 to 12



The United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) *MyPyramid* guidelines should be used when preparing meals and snacks for anyone older than 1 year of age. *MyPyramid* provides guidelines for foods that should be eaten daily. It recommends how much to eat from each of the five food groups. It also recommends that fats, oils and

sweets should be eaten sparingly.

For additional information about these nutrition guidelines:

- ◆ Visit the MyPyramid Web site at www.mypyramid.gov.
- ◆ Call the USDA Customer Outreach Specialists at (800) 687-2258.
- ◆ Write to:
USDA Center for Nutrition Policy and Promotion
3101 Park Center Drive
Room 1034
Alexandria, VA 22302-1594

Health Canada also provides useful information and guidelines through the Canada's Food Guide to Health Eating. This site can be accessed at www.hc-sc.gc.ca/fn-an/food-guide-aliment/index_e.html.

Children have special nutrition needs. The childhood years are a time to make food choices that set the habits of a lifetime. Here are some suggestions to guide your family's eating habits:

- ◆ Parents should model good eating habits.
- ◆ Try to eat meals as a family as often as possible.
- ◆ Meals and snacks should be at about the same time every day.
- ◆ Include a variety of food groups in each meal (dairy, vegetables, fruits, meats and grains).
- ◆ Provide three meals a day with 2 or 3 snacks; don't skip meals.

(continued on page 3)

Healthy Eating - 3 (continued from page 2)

- ◆ Choose healthy snacks that include at least two food groups
- ◆ Do not eat in front of the TV, while working at the computer, while playing video games or while talking on the phone.

Helping children make good food choices



- ◆ **Fruit and vegetable group:**
Eat the whole fruit instead of juice. Choose a variety of colors to include different vitamins. Use fresh, frozen, dried or canned fruit packed in juice or water.

- ◆ **Grain group:**
Choose whole grains such as: whole wheat bread, brown rice, whole wheat pasta, whole grain cereals, whole grain crackers or whole wheat tortillas. At least one-half of grain servings should be

whole grain.

- ◆ **Meat and beans group:**
Select lean or low-fat types of meat. Remove skin from poultry to reduce fat. Avoid frying. Instead, bake, broil, grill, or steam your foods.
- ◆ **Dairy group:**
For children 1 to 2 years of age whole milk with extra fat is best for growth and brain development. Reduced fat milks of 2% should be delayed until after 2 years. Offering lower fat milk and other dairy products such as part-skim cheese or 1% cottage cheese should be delayed until 2 years of age.
- ◆ **Oils:**
Choose soft tub margarine instead of butter. Sources of healthy fats include: olive oil, canola oil and vegetable oil. Limit portion sizes of high fat foods such as margarine, salad dressings and mayonnaise.

Foods high in calories and low in nutritional value such as cake, candy, potato and corn chips, cookies, honey, jam, jelly, pastries, pies, sweet toppings, syrup, fruit-flavored drinks and soft drinks, should be avoided.

Healthy eating guidelines based on ages

	1-3 years ^A	4-8 years	9-13 years
Dairy ^B	2 cups	2-3 cups	3-4 cups
Fruit	1 cup	1-1.5 cups	1.5 cups
Vegetables	1 cup	1-1.5 cups	2-2.5 cups
Meat ^C	2 ounces	3-4 ounces	5 ounces
Grains ^D	3 ounces	4-5 ounces	5-6 ounces

- A. Children between 1 and 2 years of age may gradually increase volume and texture of foods accepted.
- B. Other dairy sources that are equal to 1 cup of milk include: 1 cup of yogurt, 1.1/2 ounces natural cheese or 2 ounces of processed cheese.
- C. 1 ounce of meat is equal to: 1 egg, 2 tablespoons of peanut butter, 1/8 cup nuts, 1/4 cup cooked dry beans.
- D. 1 ounce of grain equals: 1 slice of bread, 1 cup of dry cereal or 1/2 cup of rice, pasta or cooked cereal.

General Nutrition Tips

- ◆ Limit juice to no more than 4 ounces each day.
- ◆ Limit milk to 2 to 3 cups each day. Encourage your child to drink water when thirsty.
- ◆ Offer drinks after solid foods so your child will not fill up on milk or juice.
- ◆ Offer water between meals.
- ◆ Do not let your child graze on drinks or foods between meals and snacks. By avoiding food between meals and snacks, your child will learn what hunger and fullness feel like.
- ◆ Never force your child to eat. If you are having a difficult time feeding your child, talk with your doctor.
- ◆ Schedule meals and snacks at similar times each day. Children do best with predictable schedules.
- ◆ Set a good example. Your eating habits and attitudes greatly influence your child's behaviors. Families that eat regular meals that include a variety of foods will pass those good habits to their children.
- ◆ Help your child develop independence in feeding. Finger foods are great for toddlers. Cut foods into bite-size pieces and encourage your child to feed him/ herself. It will be very messy at first but with practice he or she will get better.
- ◆ Help your child focus on eating by using a booster chair or high chair.
- ◆ Be careful not to overwhelm your child with too much food.
- ◆ Sit down for family meals as often as possible.
- ◆ Never let your child walk around with food.

(continued on page 4)

Healthy Eating - 4 (continued from page 3)

- ◆ Toddlers should drink whole milk because they need the extra fat and calories for brain development. By age two they can change to lower fat milk.
- ◆ Make sure you remove any seeds, pits, stems or other parts of fruits and vegetables that could cause choking.
- ◆ Picky eating and demanding a favorite food are common problems among toddlers. Although frustrating, picky eating is often a normal stage of development and usually does not last long.
- ◆ Do not short-order cook for your child because that will continue to limit variety of foods accepted. Instead offer a wide variety of foods on a daily basis.
- ◆ You are responsible for what and when the child eats and the child is responsible for whether he or she eats and how much is eaten. Try very hard to stick to this rule and your meals times will be more pleasant.
- ◆ Look at your child's food intake over 5 to 7 days, not on a meal-to-meal basis because children will eat more on some days than on others. As long as your child is following his or her growth curve he or she is getting adequate calories for growth. If you have concerns about your child's weight talk to your pediatrician.

For more information or to locate a pediatric gastroenterologist in your area please visit our website at:
www.naspghan.org

IMPORTANT REMINDER: This information from the North American Society for Pediatric Gastroenterology, Hepatology and Nutrition (NASPGHAN) is intended only to provide general information and not as a definitive basis for diagnosis or treatment in any particular case. It is very important that you consult your doctor about your specific condition.

References

- Kleinman, R.E. (Ed.). (2004). *Pediatric Nutrition Handbook*. (5th ed.). USA: American Academy of Pediatrics
- Satter, E. (1987). *How to get your kid to eat ... but not too much*. Palo Alto, CA: Bull Publishing Co.
- Story, M., Holt, K., & Sofka, D. (2002). *Bright Futures in Practice* (2nd ed.). Arlington, VA: National Center for Education in Maternal and Child Health.

SPECIFIC INSTRUCTIONS:



NASPGHAN • PO Box 6 • Flourtown, PA 19031
215-233-0808 • Fax: 215-233-3939