

Nutrition for Ages 1-6

When your child is one year old they grow more slowly and need less food. They may eat well at one meal, then very little at the next. They may eat only 3 foods one week then other foods the next! Don't worry, they listen to their bodies and will usually eat enough to grow and stay healthy.

Safety first! The American Academy of Pediatrics has guidelines to help prevent choking.

To Prevent Choking

Never allow a child to run, play, or lie down with food in the mouth. They should eat seated at a table.

Do not feed children less than 4 years old round or firm food unless the entire item has been chopped up. Peel fruits and veggies.

Avoid foods that children are most likely to choke on: hot dogs, sausages, meat sticks, whole nuts, seeds, whole grapes, candy (hard, gooey, or sticky candy), popcorn, chunks of peanut butter, chunks of hard fruits and veggies, marshmallows, and chewing gum.

Tips for Feeding the Toddler and Preschooler

- Make meal time fun. Limit TV, computer, or pets.
- Eat together!
- Children like routine. Have 3 meals and 2 or 3 snacks at about the same time every day.
- Offer healthy foods for meals and snacks. Children can choose what and how much to eat from the meal you offer.
- Never force your child to eat.
- Offer the same foods to the whole family. Don't make special foods. Serve milk or fruit with meals in case your child likes nothing else on the menu.
- Set a good example! Try new foods and eat plenty of fruits, veggies, whole grains and avoid processed foods and sugar-sweetened drinks.
- To help your child's appetite, don't allow grazing. Offer water between meals and snacks.
- Praise good eating habits. Don't label your child as "picky."
- Serve just one new food at a time and do not mix foods. Children may need to be offered new foods many times before they try them.
- Small children will be messy. They still enjoy finger foods and learning to use a fork or spoon. Be ready with a cloth to clean up spills.
- Allow your toddler to help prepare food. They can grow, stir, sprinkle, roll up, and spread food items or help set the table. This may increase their interest in food.

How Many Servings per Day

Serving sizes and numbers vary with age, activity, and how fast your child is growing. This guide is for a child with normal activity. It provides all the nutrients needed for good health and a good rate of growth. If your child is very active, they may need more calories from these food groups. Avoid overfeeding and force feeding.

Milk and Dairy

- Children ages 1-8 should have 2- 2 1/2 cups of milk or other dairy foods such as yogurt, fortified cow milk such as (soy, almond, rice, etc.) or cottage cheese daily.
- Children under 2 should have 2% or whole milk. Children over 2 years should have fat-free or low-fat dairy products.

Meat, Poultry, Fish, Egg, Beans, Nuts, and Seeds

1 ounce meat, 1 egg, 1 tablespoon of peanut butter, 1/4 cup cooked beans, or 1/4 cup nuts counts as a serving.

- 1 year old child: 1 1/2 ounces per day
- 2-3 year old child: 2 ounces per day
- 4-8 year old child: 4 ounces per day

Fruits

Serving size is 1/4 cup for a one year old, 1/3 cup for a 2-3 year old, and 1/2 cup or one small fruit for a 4 year old and up. Limit juice to no more than 4 ounces of 100% fruit juice per day. Avoid fruit drinks, soda, and punches.

- 1-3 year old child: 1 cup per day
- 4-8 year old child: 1-1 1/2 cups per day

Vegetables

Serving size is 1/4 cup for a one year old, 1/3 cup for a 2-3 year old, and 1/2 cup or one small vegetable for 4 years and up.

- 1 year old child: 3/4-1 cup per day
- 2-3 year old child: 1 cup per day
- 4-8 year old child: 1 1/2 cups per day

Grains

One slice of bread, 1 cup of ready-to-eat cereal, or 1/2 cup of cooked pasta, cooked rice, or cooked cereal is equal to about one ounce. Aim for 1/2 the servings to be whole grains.

- 1 year old child: 2 ounces per day
- 2-3 year old child: 3 ounces per day
- 4-8 year old child: 5 ounces per day

Dessert

Desserts are not needed at all meals. When you offer desserts they should be served as part of the meal. This is so they do not seem more pleasing than the rest of the food served. Choose healthy desserts such as fruit, custard, pudding or oatmeal raisin cookies that can be part of a well-balanced diet. Less healthy desserts such as pie, cake, cookies and other rich foods should be served less often.

Suggest Fruits and Veggies

Add grated carrots, zucchini, pumpkin, banana, applesauce, raisins, squash, berries, etc. to muffins, quick breads, and pancakes.

- Dip fresh fruit slices and veggies in yogurt or cottage cheese dip or spread with cream cheese, peanut butter, or yogurt. Top with raisins, grated carrots, crushed pineapple or banana.

- Make fruit, veggies, cubed cheese, and meat kabobs.
- Sprinkle potatoes with cheese, low-fat sour cream, and chopped broccoli.
- Add grated carrots, zucchini, and/or finely chopped mushrooms to burgers and meatloaf.
- Make smoothies with fruits, spinach, carrots, or pumpkin. Just add a little milk and yogurt.

Snacks

Active, growing children burn many calories and will likely need to eat between meals in order to keep going and growing.

We suggest healthy snacks that include milk, small pieces of fruit, cut-up raw veggies, dried fruit, cheese or meat cubes, yogurt, crackers spread with cottage cheese or peanut butter, hard cooked eggs, and non-sugared cereals. Although sweet snacks provide calories, they have little nutritional value and are bad for your child's teeth. It is better if they are offered only once in a while.

Snacks should be scheduled so they are not too frequent or too close to mealtimes. Keep snacks small and schedule them about 2 hours before or after a meal.

Prevent Cavities

Although many children are weaned from the bottle by their first birthday, those who still take a bottle should not be allowed to suck on it after they are asleep. Children's teeth should be brushed daily after breakfast and at bedtime to prevent tooth decay. Brushing or rinsing with water after eating also helps to prevent cavities. Check with your dentist or doctor about the need for fluoride.

Exercise

Children should exercise daily. Promote their interest by playing games along with them. Provide a safe and controlled, area for running, jumping, chasing balls, swimming or any activity your child is able to do. Inside games of dancing, tumbling or skipping are great for those "rainy days" when children can't play outdoors and are looking for something to do. Exercise along with a healthy diet helps promote proper growth and prevents obesity. Limit TV watching or computer and video time to less than 2 hours per day.

Other Needs

Iodine may need to be added to your child's diet and depends on where you live. Check with your doctor.

Children often do not get enough vitamin D to help build strong bones. Talk to your doctor about the need for a supplement.

Resources

www.choosemyplate.gov
www.americanheart.org
www.eatright.org
www.choosemyplate.gov

If you are a UW Health patient and have more questions please contact UW Health at one of the phone numbers listed below. You can also visit our website at www.uwhealth.org/nutrition.

Nutrition clinics for UW Hospital and Clinics (UWHC) and American Family Children's Hospital (AFCH) can be reached at: **(608) 890-5500**.

Nutrition clinics for UW Medical Foundation (UWMF) can be reached at: **(608) 287-2770**.

If you are a patient receiving care at UnityPoint – Meriter, Swedish American or a health system outside of UW Health, please use the phone numbers provided in your discharge instructions for any questions or concerns.

Your health care team may have given you this information as part of your care. If so, please use it and call if you have any questions. If this information was not given to you as part of your care, please check with your doctor. This is not medical advice. This is not to be used for diagnosis or treatment of any medical condition. Because each person's health needs are different, you should talk with your doctor or others on your health care team when using this information. If you have an emergency, please call 911. Copyright © 10/2019 University of Wisconsin Hospitals and Clinics Authority. All rights reserved. Produced by the Department of Nursing. HF#194