

Healthy Eating for Preschool Children

(2 to 5 years old)



Online Version



Department of Health

Healthy Eating for 2 to 5 years old Children

Start eating a balanced diet at young

Preschool children need 3 regular meals and 2 snacks a day. They enjoy eating with their parents. It is important for you to serve as a good model for your child by eating a balanced diet with a variety of vegetables and fruits. This helps your child develop healthy eating habits in early stage.



Serve fruit as a healthy snack

Follow the Healthy Eating Food Pyramid

Food pyramid tells you the food groups that you should eat more and what you should eat less. By choosing a variety of foods from each food group, it ensures you and your child getting sufficient nutrients.

Grains provide the body with energy and should be consumed in the largest portion. Children of this age range need about 1.5 to 3 bowls[★] of grains a day. Include some whole grains in the diet, such as brown rice, whole wheat bread or oats. They are rich in dietary fibre and help prevent constipation and intestinal diseases. They also prolong the feeling of satiety.

Vegetables and Fruits contain a wide range of minerals, vitamins, antioxidants and dietary fibre. Vegetables and fruits are good for health. Preschool children need at least ¾ bowl cooked vegetables and 1 medium sized fruits a day.

Have **Meat, fish, egg** in moderation. The alternatives to meat include dried beans, nuts, seeds and soy bean products like tofu. These foods are rich in protein and iron. Your child needs 1.5 to 3 tael of meat or fish daily. Choose lean meat and trim the fat and skin from meat or poultry. Limit processed meat products, such as sausages or luncheon meat.

Consume moderate amount of **Milk**. The alternatives are calcium-fortified soy milk, tofu and other calcium-rich foods. Children aged 2 or above can choose calcium-fortified soy milk or low fat milk. Children aged 5 or above can choose skimmed milk to reduce fat intake. **Formula milk is generally not needed.** Preschool children need about 2 glasses of milk daily (not more than 480 ml). Generally speaking, 360 to 480 ml of milk is adequate to meet their calcium needs. For those consuming a larger amount of other calcium-rich foods like dark-green leafy vegetables, tofu or tofu pudding, less milk is required.

★ 1 bowl of grains = 1 bowl of cooked rice, or rice noodles or udon; or 1½ bowls of macaroni or spaghetti; or 1¼ bowls of noodles; or 2 slices of bread; or 10 tablespoons of dry oats

Eat the least

Fat/oil, salt & sugar

Eat moderately

Milk and alternatives

Meat, fish, egg & alternatives

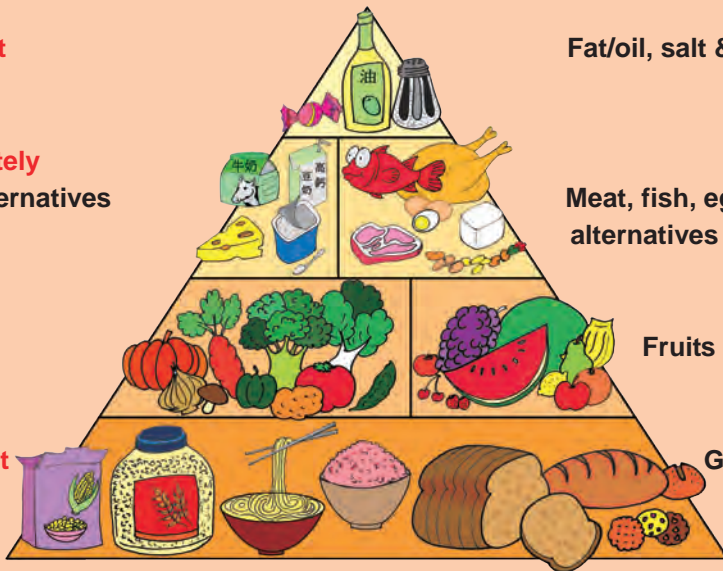
Eat more

Vegetables

Fruits

Eat the most

Grains



Have at least 4 - 5 glasses of fluid (including water, milk, clear soup, etc) a day.
Drink more water after physical activity or when the weather is hot or dry.

Foods of **high fat, salt or sugar content**, like fried chicken, chips, soft drinks or sugar added drinks should be chosen least. Limit the **amount or frequency** when these foods are offered.

Water is the best drink to keep your child hydrated. Avoid offering tea, coffee or other caffeinated drinks.

Child to dine with family:
This increases food choices and variety exposure to reduce picky eating

A sample balanced meal for child:

Rice/Pasta: $\frac{1}{2}$ to $\frac{3}{4}$ bowl*

Vegetables: $\frac{1}{4}$ to $\frac{1}{2}$ bowl*

Meat, fish, egg & alternatives: 1 to 2
tablespoon(s) (20 to 40 grams)

***1 bowl = 250 - 300 ml**



Establish Healthy Eating Habits for Children at Young

- ★ To help your child grow healthily, parents should offer 3 meals and 2 snacks at regular time daily. Select and prepare foods according to the Healthy Eating Food Pyramid:
 - ♥ offer a variety of vegetables and fruits
 - ♥ limit high fat, high salt and high sugar items
 - ♥ offer food in appropriate portions
 - ♥ let your child decide how much to eat
 - ♥ offer your child water to drink
- ★ Your child should eat independently and stop using feeding bottle
- ★ Remove distractions at meal time: turn off the TV, put away toys and electronic interactive devices
- ★ Eat with your child as often, and be a role model for healthy eating
- ★ Exercise with your child as often, like running, jumping, walking. Let your child to have 3 hours physical activity daily for a strong body. Bring your child more often for outdoors activities under the sun. Expose his arms and legs. This helps the body to make vitamin D.
- ★ Avoid using snacks as a reward or to soothe your child

If parents would like to know more about healthy eating and physical activity for 2 to 5 years old children, you can visit the 'StartSmart@school.hk' website:

<https://www.startsmart.gov.hk/en/#>

To browse and download "StartSmart Parent Guide", click on "Parents/Carers" and then click on "Health Guide" under the "Health Education Resources" option.

How to reward and manage your child's behaviour?
Please refer to 'Parenting Series' No.15 and No.16.

Consult your doctor or nurse if you have any doubts on your child's diet.



Family Health Service

Website: www.fhs.gov.hk

24-hour Information Hotline: 2112 9900