

## Dietary Guidelines for Americans

The best way to provide healthy food choices for children is to apply the messages of the *Dietary Guidelines for Americans* to your menus and food items. These guidelines are a set of recommendations designed for healthy Americans ages 2 years and older. They do not apply to infants and toddlers younger than 2 years. Using these guidelines will help you, your family, and the children in your day care have a healthier lifestyle and reduce the risk of chronic diseases such as heart disease, certain cancers, diabetes, stroke, and osteoporosis.

The U.S. Department of Agriculture and the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services publish the guidelines every 5 years. *Nutrition and Your Health: Dietary Guidelines for Americans (2000)* carries three basic messages — the ABC's for good health.

### **Aim for fitness**

- Aim for a healthy weight.
- Be physically active each day.

### **Build a healthy base**

- Let the Pyramid guide your food choices.
- Choose a variety of grains daily, especially whole grains.
- Choose a variety of fruits and vegetables daily.
- Keep food safe to eat.

### **Choose sensibly**

- Choose a diet that is low in saturated fat and cholesterol, and moderate in total fat.
- Choose beverages and foods to moderate your intake of sugars.
- Choose and prepare foods with less salt.
- If you drink alcoholic beverages, do so in moderation.

To order a single copy of the 40-page *Nutrition and Your Health: Dietary Guidelines for Americans, 2000*, (Item 147-G) for \$4.75 per copy, or the consumer pamphlet *Using the Dietary Guidelines for Americans* for \$0.50 per copy, call the Federal Consumer Information Center at (888) 878-3256. Or view and download them at these websites:  
<http://www.usda.gov/CNPP>, or  
<http://www.health.gov/dietaryguidelines/>

# Aim for Fitness

**Aim for a healthy weight.** The key to good health is a lifestyle that includes sensible eating balanced with regular physical activity. Weight gain results when more food is eaten than the body needs. Eating habits and exercise habits begin in childhood. Children are influenced by the foods you serve at meals and snacks and by watching what you eat and the physical activity that you do.

## Tips:

- Serve a variety of vegetables, fruits, and grains with little added fat or sugar.
- Serve more pasta, rice, breads, and cereals without fats and sugars added in preparation or added at the table.
- Keep children active. They should get regular physical activity to balance calories from foods they eat.
- Set a good example for children by practicing healthy eating habits and enjoying regular physical activities together.

**Be physically active each day.** Being physically active and maintaining a healthy weight are both needed for good health, but they benefit health in different ways. Adults need at least 30 minutes of moderate physical activity most every day, and children need at least 60 minutes every day.

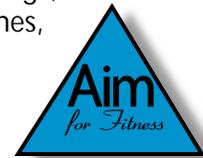
**Physical activity is essential for everyone.** It is important to encourage children to get in the habit of exercise at a young age.

## By staying active you can:

- Set a good example for the children for whom you care. Play active games with them, it's good for you and for them.
- Teach children how to play active games such as tag, ring-around-the-rosy, hide-and-seek, jump rope, and other traditional children's games.

## Physical activity helps children have fun, maintain a healthy weight, and:

- Develop strong muscles,
- Develop a healthy heart and lungs,
- Build and maintain healthy bones,
- Develop motor skills, balance and coordination,
- Develop positive attitudes,
- Improve their self-esteem.



## Physical Activities for Children — Aim for at least 60 minutes total per day:

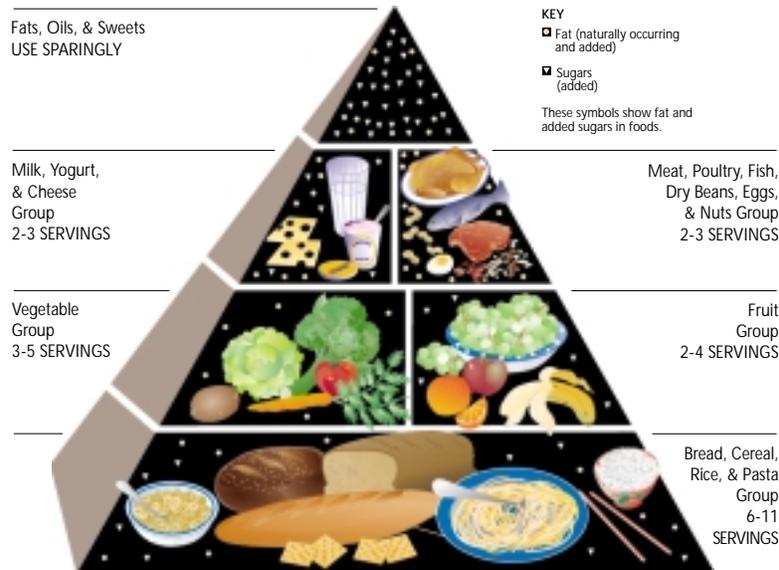
- Be spontaneously active,
- Play tag,
- Jump rope,
- Ride a bicycle or tricycle,
- Walk, skip, or run,
- Play actively during outside times,
- Roller skate or in-line skate,
- Dance.

# Build a Healthy Base

Let the Pyramid guide your food choices. The Food Guide Pyramid shows how everybody can make food choices for a healthful diet as described in the Dietary Guidelines for Americans. The Pyramid is not a rigid prescription. It is a general guide that lets you choose a healthful diet that is right for you and the children in your care. By looking at the Pyramid below, you and your children can get a good picture of the kinds of foods to eat.

The Pyramid divides food into five major food groups: grains, vegetables, fruits, milk, and meat. Each of these food groups provide some, but not all, of the nutrients and energy children need. The emphasis is on the foods from the major food groups shown in the three lower sections of the Pyramid (Grain Group, Vegetable Group, and Fruit Group). The tip is the smallest part of the Pyramid and these foods — fats, oils, and sweets — may be eaten in small amounts. For good health and proper growth, children need to eat a variety of different foods each day.

## Food Guide Pyramid A Guide to Daily Food Choices



Source: U.S. Department of Agriculture/U.S. Department of Health and Human Services

## Food Guide Pyramid (For Young Children)

USDA adapted the original Food Guide Pyramid to provide special guidance for young children. This USDA Food Guide Pyramid for Young Children is targeted toward children 2 to 6 years old. Like the traditional Pyramid, the Pyramid for Young Children is an outline of foods to eat each day based on the Dietary Guidelines. It similarly promotes balanced meals, moderation, and a variety of food choices, with special emphasis on grain products, fruits, and vegetables. Notice that there are pictures of children playing around the Pyramid. The message is that physical activity is also important to good health. There are some differences between the original Food Guide Pyramid and the Pyramid for Young Children, however, and these are explained on the next page.

Two to three year old children need the same number of servings as four to six year old children but may need smaller portions, about 2/3 of a serving (except for milk). Two to six year old children need a total of two servings from the milk group each day. Refer to Child and Adult Care Food Program meal patterns for information about serving sizes. By using the CACFP meal patterns and serving a variety of foods at meals and snacks, you can help children have healthy diets and learn healthy eating habits that last a lifetime.

## Food Guide Pyramid For Young Children



# Build a Healthy Base

(continued)

**What is the main focus of the Food Guide Pyramid for Young Children?** The main focus of the Food Guide Pyramid for Young Children is on eating a variety of foods. The Pyramid divides foods into five major food groups: grain, vegetable, fruit, milk, and meat.

The foods shown in the Pyramid are those that many children know and enjoy. Each of these food groups provides some, but not all, of the nutrients and energy children need. No one food group is more important than another. For proper health and proper growth, children need to eat a variety of different foods each day.

**How is the Pyramid for Young Children different from the original?**

- The Food Guide Pyramid for Young Children is different from the original in several ways:
- The food group names are shorter and use single numbers for the number of servings, rather than ranges.

- The pyramid graphic was designed to be appealing to young children. It uses realistic food items, in single-serving portions.
- It eliminates the abstract “sprinkles” that symbolize fat and added sugar in the original Pyramid and uses drawings of such foods instead.
- It emphasizes the educational message that physical activity is important. Surrounding the Pyramid are drawings of young children engaged in active pursuits.

**Tips for serving meals that meet the recommendations of the Food Guide Pyramid:**

- Choose a variety of foods from each group so that children receive the daily nutrients needed for health.
- Serve whole grain breads and cereals, and vegetables and fruits.
- Also serve some lowfat dairy products and lowfat foods from the meat and bean group.
- Allow children to enjoy fats and sweets occasionally.

For more information, *Tips for Using the Food Guide Pyramid for Young Children 2 to 6 years old*, USDA Program Aid 1647, March 1999, can be purchased for \$5.00 from the Government Printing Office by calling (202) 512-1800 (Stock Number 001-0004665-9), or at <http://www.usda.gov/CNPP/KidsPyra.index.htm>.

**Choose a variety of grains daily, especially whole grains.** Foods from grains like wheat, rice, and oats help to form the foundation of a healthy diet. Grains provide vitamins, minerals, and carbohydrates. Foods made from grains are naturally low in fat unless fat is added during processing or as an ingredient in a recipe. Whole grain foods are the best choices because they have not been refined, so they have a larger amount of fiber and certain nutrients. Eating plenty of whole grains such as whole wheat bread or oatmeal as part of the healthful eating patterns described by the Dietary Guidelines may help protect against many chronic diseases.

**Tips for serving a variety of grains:**

- Read the Nutrition Facts Label on foods in the grocery store so you can choose whole grain products. For example, look for one of the following ingredients first on the label's ingredient list: whole wheat, whole oats, whole rye, brown rice, oatmeal, whole grain corn, graham flour, bulgur, pearl barley.
- Include a variety of enriched rice, macaroni, noodles, and other pasta products.
- In main and side dishes, increase the proportion of grains to other ingredients. For example, serve a thicker pizza crust.
- Add grains such as pre-cooked rice and oats to ground beef in meat loaf and casseroles. Use bulgur or barley to thicken soups.
- Serve sandwiches with one slice of whole wheat bread and once slice of white bread.

- Substitute whole-wheat flour for part of the white flour in recipes. When introducing whole grains, try starting with 10-percent whole grain flour or grains, and gradually increase the amount each time the recipe is prepared.
- Serve brown rice as well as white rice.

**Choose a variety of fruits and vegetables daily.**

Fruits and vegetables are key parts of a daily diet. Eating plenty of fruits and vegetables of different kinds, as part of the healthful eating pattern described in the Dietary Guidelines, may help protect against many chronic diseases. This food group provides essential vitamins and minerals, fiber, and other substances needed for good health. Variety is important because different fruits and vegetables are rich in different nutrients. Most fruits and vegetables are naturally low in fat and calories and are filling.

**Tips for including more fruits and vegetables:**

- Serve vegetables higher in fiber such as cooked dry beans, broccoli, tomatoes, leafy greens, potatoes with skin, and carrots.
- Serve raw vegetable salads and raw vegetables.
- Season vegetables with herbs for taste appeal.
- Serve fresh fruits for snacks and for naturally sweet desserts.
- Buy fruit and vegetables in season for better prices and taste.
- Serve fresh fruits higher in fiber, such as those with edible skins — like apples, pears, nectarines, peaches — and those with edible seeds, such as berries and bananas.

# Build a Healthy Base

(continued)

**Keep food safe to eat.** Safe food has little risk of causing foodborne illness (food poisoning). Foodborne illness can be caused by eating food that contains harmful bacteria, toxins, parasites, viruses, or contamination by chemicals. Some foods require special care to be sure they are safe to eat: eggs, meats, poultry, fish, shellfish, milk products, and fresh fruits and vegetables. Young children are at high risk of foodborne illness so be especially careful to prepare and serve foods using food safety precautions.

## Tips for keeping food safe to eat:

- Never serve unpasteurized juices, unpasteurized milk, fresh bean sprouts, or foods containing partially cooked or raw eggs.
- Cook meat, poultry, fish, and shellfish until completely done. The internal temperature should be 165 °F, except for poultry (breast-170 °F; whole bird-180 °F).
- Heat leftovers to an internal temperature of 165 °F. Use leftovers only once, then throw any leftover away.
- Reheat sauces, soups, marinades, and gravies to a rolling boil.
- Wash your hands and the children's hands often (for 20 seconds, count to 30) with warm, soapy water.
- Wash raw fruit and vegetables under running water before eating them. Use a vegetable brush to remove surface dirt if necessary.
- Store raw meat, poultry, eggs, fish, and shellfish in containers away from other foods on the bottom shelf of the refrigerator and do not prepare them on the same surface as you prepare other foods.
- Never leave raw or cooked meat, poultry, eggs, fish, or shellfish out at room temperature for more than 2 hours, or 1 hour, if air temperature is above 90 °F.
- Keep cold foods cold (below 40 °F) and hot foods hot (above 140 °F). Test temperatures with a food thermometer.
- If you're not sure that food has been prepared, served, or stored safely, throw it out.
- Never thaw meat, poultry, fish, or shellfish at room temperature. Thaw these foods in the refrigerator, microwave (cook immediately), or cold water changing the water every 30 minutes.

## For more information, contact:

- USDA's Meat and Poultry Hotline, 1-800-535-4555 or (202-720-3333 in the Washington, DC area)
- FDA's Food Information Center, 1-888-SAFEFOOD (1-888-723-3366)
- <http://www.foodsafety.gov>
- <http://www.fightbac.org>

# Choose Sensibly

**Choose a diet that is low in saturated fat and cholesterol, and moderate in total fat.** Health professionals believe that food habits established in childhood are important in preventing heart disease later in life. They recommend reducing the risk of heart disease by decreasing the amount of total fat, saturated fat, and cholesterol in the diet.

However, remember that the advice in the Dietary Guidelines about limiting fat, saturated fat, and cholesterol does not apply to infants and toddlers below the age of 2 years. In fact, the American Academy of Pediatrics states, “No restriction should be placed on the fat and cholesterol content of diets of infants less than 2 years...” These first two years of a child’s life are a time when “rapid growth and development require high energy intakes.”

Fat is an essential part of everyone’s diet but it is important to choose sensibly. Aim for a total fat intake of no more than 30 percent of calories from fat. As children begin to consume fewer calories from fat, they should replace these calories by eating more grain products, vegetables, fruits, low-fat milk products or other calcium-rich foods, and beans, lean meat, poultry, fish, or other protein-rich foods. Beginning at age 2, children should get most of their calories from grain products; fruits; vegetables; low fat dairy products; and beans, lean meats, poultry, fish or nuts.

## Tips for reducing fat:

- Choose main dishes that can be prepared without added fat. Bake, broil, or boil instead of fry. Trim fat from meats.
- Drain all meat after cooking.
- Be careful when selecting precooked breaded meats, fish, or poultry (example: chicken nuggets or fish sticks). Check the fat content printed on the label and select those products that are lower in fat, and bake rather than fry them.
- Use part-skim mozzarella cheese and lowfat cottage or ricotta cheese in recipes listing cheese as an ingredient.
- Use processed meats such as luncheon meat or hot dogs sparingly, since these items are generally higher in fat.
- Serve reduced-fat salad dressings.
- Balance higher fat foods in menus with items lower in fat. For example, with chicken nuggets serve baked potatoes or steamed fresh vegetables rather than french fries.
- Purchase soft margarine, which is lower in saturated fat than stick margarine.
- Purchase leaner meats (such as ground beef with no more than 15 percent fat).



# Choose Sensibly

(continued)

**Choose beverages and foods to moderate your intake of sugars.** Offer and use sugars in moderation. Sugars and many foods that contain them in large amounts supply calories, but they may be limited in vitamins and minerals. Foods containing sugars and starches can promote tooth decay. Frequently eating or drinking sweet or starchy foods between meals is more likely to harm teeth than eating the same foods at meals and then brushing.

Consuming excess calories from foods high in added sugars, like soft drinks may contribute to weight gain or lower intake of more nutritious foods. Use the following list to identify the most commonly eaten foods that are high in added sugars (unless they are labeled “sugar free” or “diet”). Limit your use of these beverages and foods. Offer water as a beverage to children.

The major sources of added sugars in the United States include:

- Soft drinks
- Cakes, cookies, pies
- Fruitades and drinks such as fruit punch and lemonade
- Dairy desserts such as ice cream
- Candy

Foods contain sugars in various forms. Read ingredient labels for clues on sugar content. A food is likely to be high in sugars if one of these names appears first or second in the ingredient list or if several names are listed: *sucrose, glucose, maltose, dextrose, lactose, fructose, honey, fruit juice concentrate, brown sugar, corn sweetener, corn syrup, high fructose corn syrup, invert sugar, malt syrup, molasses, raw sugar, syrup, table sugar.*

## Tips for using less sugar:

- Use seasonal fresh fruits when possible. Avoid adding sugar or honey to fresh fruits.
- Use fruits packed in light syrup or juice. Since these are already sweet, there is no need to add sugar.
- Use fresh or frozen fruits in snacks.
- Limit the use of sweet snacks and sweet breakfast foods. Use cereals that are not sugar-coated. If children are reluctant to give up higher sugared cereals, mix a small amount of the higher sugar cereal with the non-sugary cereal.
- Modify recipes for sweet snacks and sweet breakfast items to reduce sugar without sacrificing quality.

**Choose and prepare foods with less salt.** Table salt contains sodium and chloride. Both are essential in the diet. However, most Americans consume more salt and sodium than they need.

Salt is the main source of sodium in foods. Only small amounts of salt occur naturally in foods. Most of the salt we eat comes from foods that have salt added during processing or during preparation in a restaurant or at home. Foods with added salt include: cured and processed meats, cheeses, ready-to-eat snacks, prepared frozen entrees and dinners, packaged mixes, canned soups, pickles, and salad dressings. If you are planning to serve any of these foods:

- Check the sodium content on the food label, Nutrition Facts panel.
- Select foods that have less sodium.

Many people can reduce their chances of developing high blood pressure by consuming less salt. Currently there is no way to predict who will develop high blood pressure from eating too much salt. However, it is a good idea to do both of the following:

Serve foods lower in sodium.

Reduce salt during food preparation.

Consuming less salt or sodium is not harmful and can be recommended for the healthy, normal person.

#### **Tips for moderating salt intake:**

- When purchasing foods, read the label, Nutrition Facts carefully for sodium content. Select foods that are lower in sodium.

- If you salt foods in cooking or at the table, add small amounts. Learn to use spices and herbs, rather than salt, to enhance the flavor of food.
- Limit the number of times you serve salty snacks such as crackers or pretzels.
- Serve smaller amounts of salty condiments such as mustard, soy sauce, catsup, pickles, and olives — or serve them less often.
- Do not add salt when cooking pasta and rice.
- Review recipes for ways to reduce sodium, such as substituting herbs and spices for some of the salt, and/or reduce the amount of salt added.
- Choose fresh, plain, frozen, or canned vegetables without added salt most often.
- Choose fresh or frozen fish, shellfish, poultry and meat most often. They are lower in salt than most canned and processed forms.

#### **Support programs that encourage children to choose a drug-free and alcohol-free lifestyle.**

The final Dietary Guidelines recommendation is targeted to adults and states: “If you drink alcoholic beverages, do so in moderation.”

**Children and teens should not drink alcoholic beverages.** Using alcoholic beverages involves risks to health and other serious problems. As someone who cares about children’s health and well-being, support programs that encourage children to choose a drug-free and alcohol-free lifestyle.

# Helping Children Learn About Food and Eating

Helping children learn about foods and how they are vital to health is an important part of your role as a child care provider. It helps children to:

- Form positive attitudes about food and eating;
- Learn to accept a wide variety of foods;
- Establish healthful eating habits early in life;
- Learn to share and socialize at mealtime (in a group eating situation); and
- Be ready to continue learning while at child care.

## Tips on how to help children learn about food and eating.

**1. Get children involved in activities with food and eating.** Children are natural explorers. They are constantly asking questions and discovering the world around them. Children learn through their play and through hands-on activities.

- Think of learning activities that involve the senses of touch, smell, taste, hearing, and seeing.
- Allow children to handle food, mix it, prepare it, smell it, and taste it.
- Help them learn to describe foods as they see them. Ask them to talk about a food's color, shape, and texture.

**2. Plan activities that match children's abilities and interests.** Children develop rapidly. Activities should take into consideration the children's developmental readiness. This includes both what the children are mentally ready to learn and what they are physically capable of doing.

Younger children are not able to perform the same tasks that older children can. When planning a food activity, think about the age of the children. Almost any activity can be changed to fit the abilities and the interests of the children being taught.

**3. Plan simple activities before harder ones.** Children, like adults, want to be successful in what they do. You can help children be successful by planning activities that are simple and then moving to harder ones.

For example, have the children learn the names of foods. Then as they get older, get them involved in food preparation activities such as measuring.

**4. Build on what a child already knows.** Children learn by building on something they already know. When you introduce a new topic about food and eating, connect it to something already familiar to the child.

For example, most children have seen adults put gasoline in their cars. Explain that just as gas makes cars go, food "makes children go." It helps them to be able to grow and play. Just as gas is fuel for cars, food is fuel for people.

# Fun With Food Activities

On the following pages you will find fun activities that you can do with the children in your care to get them excited about food and eating. Remember to engage children only in activities for which they are developmentally ready.



## Make a buttermilk smoothie.

### Why?

Children love to assemble ingredients and watch the whole mixture change into a treat. This activity introduces lowfat buttermilk — a food children may not eat regularly. When it is combined with sweet strawberries and a bit of sugar it creates a delicious, rich tasting treat that children will enjoy.

### How?

Equipment: A blender or electric mixer

Directions: Blend all ingredients to make a smooth, slightly tart beverage.

### When?

Anytime is a great time for a fruit smoothie. Consider serving the buttermilk smoothie as a morning or afternoon snack and have the children help assemble the ingredients.

**Extend the activity.** Making buttermilk smoothies is an opportunity for the children to taste a different type of milk. Look for books and videos that show how milk is processed. Discuss where the milk comes from and how it is processed before it is bought at the store, or arrange to take the children on a tour of a local dairy farm.

### Credit:

Ingredients for 1 serving:	1 to 2 years	3 to 5 years	6 to 12 years
lowfat buttermilk*	1/2 cup	3/4 cup	1 cup
frozen strawberries or peaches	1/4 cup	1/2 cup	3/4 cup

Sugar is optional (sweeten to taste depending on the sweetness of the fruit)

- USDA recommends serving only whole milk to children 1 to 2 years of age.



## Food Matching Game.

### Why?

Children love card matching games and this kind of activity helps children get ready for reading. When matching games include foods, older children can begin to put foods into food groups and plan healthy meals.

### How?

Enlarge and copy the food picture pages provided in this booklet. Make two copies of each page. Cut out the food pictures, making sure all the cards are the same size.

**How to play the game:** For the younger children: Give the children all the cards and ask them to match the pictures on any two cards that are the same.

For the older children: Place all the cards face down on the floor or table. Children take turns turning over two cards to find a match. The object of the game is for the children to remember where the cards are so they can make a match. The child with the most matches at the end of the game is the winner. When a matching pair is found, the child keeps those cards. If the cards do not match, the child returns the cards, face down, and the next child takes a turn. Continue taking turns until all the card pairs are matched.

### When?

Quiet play always makes a nice transition from active play to mealtime. Try this game just before meal or snack time. When the children understand the game they may be able to play while you put the finishing touches on the meal or snack.

**Extend the Activity.** A great way to extend this activity is to have older children help you cut out the food pictures to make the playing cards. All of the children can help with coloring and decorating the pictures before the game is played.

Discuss where foods come from. Using the pictures, ask the children which of the foods they have eaten recently. Are any of the foods offered at lunch today?

Encourage children to find food pictures in magazines. There are lots of ways to sort foods. Ask children to invent their own way of sorting foods. Some examples would be by color, dry, fresh, comes in a box, never tried, etc. Ask the older children if they can sort food pictures into the five food groups shown on the Food Guide Pyramid (Grain Group, Vegetable Group, Fruit Group, Milk Group, Meat Group, Fats and Sweets). You can show them a picture of the Food Guide Pyramid and have them place the foods on the different levels.



## Yogurt parfaits.

### Why?

Creating foods that look as good as they taste is a pleasure for all of us. Offering children healthy foods and encouraging them to “put them together” in a way that pleases them is a great way to introduce new foods.

### How?

Place lowfat vanilla yogurt, lowfat granola or any other flaked cereal, and fresh, frozen, or canned fruit in separate serving bowls on the table. Provide each child with a tall clear glass. Plastic parfait glasses work well and are fun for the children to fill.

Show the children an example of a completed parfait showing layers of yogurt, cereal, and fruit. Tell the children they can fill their cup with any of the foods in any order. Make sure the children wash their hands first, and that clean dishes and handling procedures are used.

Yogurt parfaits can be counted toward meeting the bread, fruit, and/or meat meal pattern requirements if the minimum amount of each of the foods is offered at the start of the meal or snack. Serve extras of these foods in side dishes if your glasses are small.

### Credit:

	1 to 2 years	3 to 5 years	6 to 12 years
Serve:			
Yogurt, lowfat	2 oz	2 oz	4 oz
Fruit and/or Cereal, cold, dry	1/2 cup	1/2 cup	3/4 cup
	1/4 cup	1/3 cup	3/4 cup

### When?

Yogurt, cereal, and fruit parfaits make a great snack treat.

**Extend the Activity.** Discuss where yogurt comes from and how it is made. Make yogurt cheese by pouring 8 ounces of unflavored lowfat yogurt into a mesh strainer lined with a coffee filter, suspended in a bowl. Place in the refrigerator overnight to allow all the liquid from the yogurt to drain. The yogurt forms a soft, lowfat cheese. Serve plain or season with garlic powder and sesame seeds and serve as a spread on crackers.



## Bean sprouting.

### Why?

Children are amazed to see a simple bean become a living plant in just a few days. Watching plants grow and change fosters an interest in science and an enthusiasm for learning. Nutrition experts agree that when children handle and explore foods they are more willing to try them. Dry beans are naturally low in fat and provide fiber, B vitamins, and protein. Dried beans and peas can be counted toward meeting the meal pattern requirements as either a vegetable or a meat alternate.

### How?

Ask the children to place one dry bean in a zip-lock bag with a moist paper towel. Lima beans work well but many other beans will also sprout easily. Place the bags in a warm place and ask the children to check them daily. The beans should sprout in a few days.

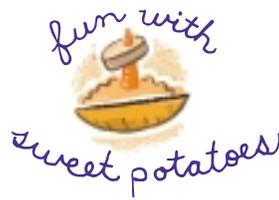
### When?

Anytime is a great time for indoor sprouting and gardening projects. Late winter is a fun time for these projects since it generates discussion about the coming of spring.

**Extend the Activity.** If the children enjoy sprouting beans, try sprouting other foods such as a carrot top (in a shallow dish of water), a whole sweet potato (bottom half in water), and an avocado pit (in a shallow glass of water).

Use gardening projects (like planting tomato or squash seeds in paper cups or in your vegetable garden) to begin discussions about where foods come from. Introduce new fruits and vegetables at meals and snacks.

Read *Jack and the Beanstalk* to the children followed by the bean sprouting activity.



## Sweet potato boats.

### Why?

Children are naturally skeptical of new foods, but they are more likely to try a new food when they have been actively involved in its preparation. Don't forget children may need to see a new food 6 to 12 times before they want to eat it. This sweet potato activity and recipe can be the first step in introducing children to this delicious and healthy food.

### How?

You will need:

- Small sweet potatoes (one potato for two children)
- 1 tablespoon orange juice for each potato
- 1 tablespoon brown sugar for each potato
- Sprinkle of cinnamon for each potato
- 2 carrot sticks for each potato
- 1 slice of bread toasted and cut diagonally (one slice of bread for two children)

Wash the sweet potatoes. Bake at 350 °F for about 1 hour, or microwave for 15 minutes, turning once in the middle of the cooking time. Check for doneness and cook until the potatoes are soft in the center. Cool enough to handle. Cut potatoes in half and scoop out the center saving the skin to refill later. Have the children help. Make sure that children wash hands first, and that clean dishes and

handling procedures are used. Mash together the potato, orange juice, brown sugar, and cinnamon. Refill potato skins with the mixture. Let each child decorate his or her potato boat with a carrot stick mast and a bread sail.

**Credit:** Each child should have his own boat, which is one-half of a small sweet potato. For lunch or supper, the vegetable/fruit component must provide two different vegetables and/or fruits (sweet potato and carrot sticks) to equal 1/4 cup for 1 to 2 year olds, 1/2 cup for 3 to 5 year olds, and 3/4 cup for 6 to 12 year olds. The bread sail can also be credited towards meeting the lunch/supper requirement of 1/2 slice bread for 1 to 5 year olds and 1 slice of bread for 6 to 12 year olds. Sweet potato boats can also be served as part of a snack.

### When?

Making sweet potato boats is a great activity before lunch or supper. Children can enjoy their new creations for the meal and share in the excitement of setting the table for this festive meal.

**Extend the activity.** Sprout sweet potatoes by placing the lower half of the potato in a glass filled with water. Children can see the formation of the roots at the bottom and the vine at the top. Ask children to describe other ways they have eaten sweet potatoes and discuss other foods that are orange in color.



## Salad in a bag.

### Why?

Experts agree that the way a food looks and how it is served goes a long way toward encouraging children to eat something new. Try this fun way to prepare and eat salad.

### How?

Provide salad fixings such as fresh spinach leaves (chopped), grated carrots, mandarin orange sections, and ranch or Italian dressing. Allow children to make their own individual salads in a plastic, sealable sandwich bag. Fill the bag; add salad dressing, close, and shake. Serve with individual forks and allow children to eat from the bag. Make sure that children wash hands first, and that clean dishes and handling procedures are used.

**Credit:** Each child should have his own salad in a bag. For lunch or supper the vegetable/fruit component must provide two different vegetables and/or fruits to equal 1/4 cup for 1 to 2 year olds, 1/2 cup for 3 to 5 year olds, and 3/4 cup for 6 to 12 year olds. For snack, the vegetable or fruit must equal 1/2 cup for 1 to 5 year olds, and 3/4 cup for 6 to 12 year olds.

(Note: This activity may not be appropriate for 1 to 2 year olds as eating from a plastic bag with a fork may be too difficult for them.)

### When?

Salad in a bag is a great way to start a meal or it can make a great snack. For snack, have children prepare the salad in a bag and serve wheat crackers and water to drink.

**Extend the Activity.** Discuss foods that are cooked and foods that are eaten raw. Discuss foods eaten both cooked and raw. Ask children to cut pictures from magazines of foods that are good to eat raw. Ask children to suggest vegetables that could be served in the next salad they make. Read a classic book such as *Peter Rabbit* and discuss Mr. McGregor's garden.



## Create a creature.

### Why?

Art and nutrition come together for fun and good eating with this creative activity.

### How?

Serve kiwi slices and melon strips with broccoli flowerets, pineapple tidbits, and grated carrots. Allow the children to create their own salad creatures or an edible collage on a plate. Make sure that children wash their hands first, and that clean dishes and handling procedures are used.

**Credit:** For snack, serve children ages 1 to 5 years 1/2 cup of fruit, and 3/4 cup fruit for 6 to 12 year olds, plus another component such as milk or graham crackers (refer to CACFP meal patterns for requirements).

### When?

Making an artistic creation can take some time. Save this activity for a morning or afternoon snack when children can enjoy their creation and then enjoy the same food as part of their snack.

**Extend the Activity.** Discuss the taste and texture of each fruit/vegetable used to make the "creature." Ask children to describe the taste — sweet or tart, and the texture — crunchy, smooth, and/or chewy.



## Learning shapes.

### Why?

Shapes and patterns are an important part of learning math skills. Young children love the challenge of identifying shapes and making a pattern out of different shapes.

### How?

Serve a simple snack of crackers in several different shapes with cheese cut into different shapes. Ask the children to describe the different shapes and line shapes up in a pattern... square, square, circle, square, square, and circle. Discuss the different patterns and ask the children to copy a pattern you have made. Practice counting and sorting with the older children. Make sure that children wash hands first, and that clean dishes and handling procedures are used. When your discussion is done enjoy a great snack together.

**Credit:** The crackers and cheese can be served towards meeting Child and Adult Care Food Program meal pattern requirements (refer to CACFP meal patterns for requirements).

### When?

Snacktime is an ideal time for discussing shapes and colors, and having the children make and follow patterns.

**Extend the Activity.** Ask children to find and describe different shapes in the room or the outside play area.



## Grain collage.

### Why?

This activity can help children understand that grains can be ground and made into bread, crackers, and pasta.

### How?

Provide the children with a variety of dry grains such as cracked wheat or bulgur, dried corn, uncooked white rice and/or brown rice, and barley, and various shapes of pasta such as bow ties, wagon wheels, and rotini. Provide glue and heavy paper. Allow the children to glue different grains and pasta onto the paper to make a picture or collage. Allow the pictures to dry overnight on a flat surface.

### When?

This is a great indoor activity before a meal or snack when one of the grains or pastas will be served.

**Extend the Activity.** Discuss various forms of grains:

- *Corn*: cornmeal, grits, hominy
- *Wheat*: White and whole wheat bread, some ready-to-eat cereals, pasta
- *Oats*: oatmeal, oat bread, granola, some ready-to-eat cereals

When a grain product is served, ask children to identify the food and the grain from which it is made.



## Bready Bears.

### Why?

Watching bread dough transform into a fresh loaf of delicious bread is a treat for everyone. At the same time children are enjoying a delicious treat they have also learned how bread is made and that yeast makes bread rise.

### How?

The following recipe provides ingredients for 6 children to make Bready Bears.

Ingredients:

- 2 1-lb loaves of frozen bread dough, thawed
- 1 tablespoon water
- Vegetable oil or oil spray
- Raisins
- Baking pans

Thaw the dough according to the package directions. Lightly grease two baking sheets with vegetable oil or oil spray. Cut each loaf of bread into thirds and give one piece of dough to each child.

To Make:

- Bear's body and head - Take 1/2 of each child's dough and shape into 2 rounds (smaller for head and larger for body). Flatten each round and have the rounds touch each other.

- Bear's arms and legs - Shape 4 pieces of dough into balls and press into the body.
- Bear's ears - Shape two round ears made of dough and press to head.

Place the bears on the baking pans. Let them rise for about 30 minutes. After they have doubled in size place raisin eyes and nose on the bears. Bake them at 375 °F oven for 15-20 minutes or until golden brown.

### When?

This activity will take over an hour so plan a morning or afternoon and begin early to avoid a last minute rush.

**Extend the Activity.** Read a story about bears followed by making the Bready Bears in your own kitchen.

This activity is a great way to introduce a science activity about what makes bread rise. Place 1 teaspoon of yeast, 1/2 teaspoon sugar, and 1/2 cup warm water in a small jar. Tightly cover the top of the jar with a balloon or small plastic glove held in place with a rubber band. Put the jar in a warm place. Over the next hour the balloon or plastic glove will "blow up" or fill with gas produced by the yeast. Explain to children that yeast makes bread rise in the same way.



## A children's book about vegetable gardening.

### Why?

When a story is about food and eating, the stage is set for an enjoyable mealtime.

### How?

Read the gardening book aloud to the children. After reading the book, encourage the children to name foods that they might plant if starting a vegetable garden. Offer some of the foods discussed at the next meal or snack.

### When?

Reading books to children is a good transition from active play to mealtime. Story time or circle time before meals can be an important part of your everyday schedule.

**Extend the Activity.** Visit your local library to find additional children's books on food, nutrition, and gardening. Books and reading set the stage for a lifetime of learning and can help children learn to enjoy a variety of foods.

## Keeping Parents Informed

Good nutrition begins at home and continues in child care and in school. As a child care provider, you work as a partner with parents to provide healthy meals and help children develop healthful food habits that will last a lifetime. Parents can and will support your nutrition education efforts when you communicate with them about what their children are eating, and the food-related learning experiences they are having.

One way to communicate with parents is by sending home short letters describing what their child has done in child care that day. This section provides three short letters that you can copy and complete. Each letter provides a brief description of a food experience the children have had. Complete the blank space in the letter so parents can read about what their child has experienced on that day.

### Directions:

1. Select the letter that fits the description of a food-related activity that you have done with the children that day.
2. Make one copy of the letter and complete the blanks describing what the children have done. Sign your name at the bottom of the letter in the space provided.
3. Make enough copies of the letter to send one home with each child.

Dear Parent(s),

Learning to eat a variety of foods is an important step in your child's education. Developing healthy food habits in childhood can last a lifetime. Our menus for meals and snacks include a variety of favorite foods, as well as new foods. Child care experts tell us that children may need to be offered a new food 6 to 12 times before they want to eat it. However, children in my care are never forced to eat a food they do not want.

**Today your child was offered a new food. The new food was \_\_\_\_\_**  
Name of food

To introduce children to new foods, we read stories about food, have simple cooking experiences, talk about how food grows, and where it comes from. You can reinforce what your child has learned in child care by providing the same kinds of learning activities at home.

Your Child Care Provider,



Dear Parent(s),

Eating a variety of foods is the best way to be sure that your child gets the nutrients needed for good health. This is as true for children as it is for adults. Children are more likely to try an unfamiliar food when they have been involved in preparing it.

**Today your child participated in a food preparation activity. We prepared**

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Cooking and preparing food with kids can be a fun adventure for the whole family. You can reinforce what your child has learned in childcare by providing simple cooking experiences at home. Ask your child to show you what she or he learned today. Bookstores and local libraries also have many cookbooks designed especially for children and parents to cook together.

Your Child Care Provider,



Dear Parent(s),

Parents and child care providers are partners in helping children learn to make healthy food choices to establish a lifetime of good eating habits. At my child care home, your child is served nutritious meals and snacks and has opportunities to learn about food and eating.

**Today your child learned something new about food. It was**

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You can reinforce what your child learns at child care by:

- Talking about what your child learned in child care each day;
- Encouraging your child to try new foods at home;
- Letting your child help at home with preparing simple foods; and
- Making healthy food choices yourself.

Your Child Care Provider,



## Choking Prevention

Always watch or sit with children during meals and snacks. Young children, ages 2 to 3 especially, are at risk of choking on food and remain at risk until they can chew and swallow better by about age 4. Using the *Food Guide Pyramid for Young Children* (see page 19) as a guide, offer 2- to 3-year-olds the same variety of foods as the rest of the children in your care, but prepared in forms that are easy for them to chew and swallow.

### **Watch children during meals and snacks to make sure they:**

- Sit quietly.
- Eat slowly.
- Chew food well before swallowing.
- Eat small portions and take only one bite at a time.
- Finish swallowing before leaving the table.

### **Prepare foods so that they are easy to chew:**

- Cut foods into small pieces or thin slices.
- Cut round foods, like hot dogs, lengthwise into thin strips.
- Remove all bones from fish, chicken, and meat.
- Cook food such as carrots or celery until slightly soft. Then cut into sticks.
- Remove seeds and pits from fruit.
- Spread peanut butter thinly.

**The foods which are popular with young children are often the ones which have caused choking. Foods that may cause choking:**

*Firm, smooth, or slippery foods that slide down the throat before chewing, like:*

- Hot dog rounds
- Hard candy
- Large pieces of fruit
- Granola
- Peanuts
- Whole grapes
- Cherries with pits

*Small, dry, or hard foods that are difficult to chew and easy to swallow whole, like:*

- Popcorn
- Small pieces of raw carrot, celery, or other raw hard vegetables
- Nuts and seeds
- Potato and corn chips
- Pretzels

*Sticky or tough foods that do not break apart easily and are hard to remove from the airway like:*

- Spoonfuls or chunks of peanut butter or other nut/seed butters
- Chunks of meat
- Chewing gum
- Marshmallows
- Raisins and other dried fruit

## CHECK CALL CARE

- ▶ **CHECK** the scene for safety
- ▶ **CHECK** the victim for consciousness, breathing, pulse, and bleeding
- ▶ **DIAL 9-1-1** or local emergency number
- ▶ **CARE** for conditions you find

### INFANTS (birth to 1)

If conscious but choking . . .



Give  
5 back  
blows...



And  
5 chest thrusts

Repeat blows  
and thrusts  
until object  
comes out

If not breathing . . .



Give 1 slow breath  
about every 3 seconds

If air won't go in . . .

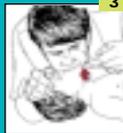


**STEP 1** Give 5 back  
blows...

And 5  
chest  
thrusts



**STEP 2** Look for  
and clear  
any object  
from  
mouth



**STEP 3** Reattempt  
breaths

Repeat steps 1, 2, & 3 until breaths go in or help arrives

If not breathing and no pulse . . .



Give CPR—repeat  
sets of 5 compressions  
and 1 breath

### CHILDREN (1-8)

If conscious but choking . . .



Give abdominal  
thrusts until object  
comes out

If not breathing . . .



Give 1 slow breath  
about every 3 seconds

If air won't go in . . .



**STEP 1** Give up  
to 5  
abdominal  
thrusts



**STEP 2** Look  
for  
and  
clear  
any  
object  
from  
mouth



**STEP 3** Reattempt  
breaths

If not breathing and no pulse . . .



Give CPR—repeat  
sets of 5 compressions  
and 1 breath

If bleeding . . .



Apply pressure,  
elevate, and  
bandage

Local Emergency  
Telephone Number: \_\_\_\_\_

Everyone should know what to do in an emergency.  
Call your local American Red Cross \_\_\_\_\_  
for information on CPR and first aid courses.



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