

# Healthy Eating For Your Family

How to Feed Your Child at Every Age



# It's Never Too Early to Eat Healthfully

Healthy eating habits set your child up for success.

Benefits of healthy eating:

- Children get the foods they need to learn, play and grow healthfully.
- Children are less likely to be overweight.
- Children are less likely to develop diabetes or cardiovascular disease later in life.



As a caregiver, you can inspire healthy eating by how you feed your child.

Try to be patient as your child learns how and what to eat. Praise the child's effort to try new food or sit at the table for a meal.

Positive eating experiences support a child's health now and in the future. What makes mealtime enjoyable in your family?



**Choose a variety of healthy foods for you and your family:**

# What to Feed Your Child

Healthy eating habits take time to build. It starts by choosing wholesome, nutritious foods each day. A healthy eating pattern can reflect your needs, preferences, culture and budget.



## Choose Less Often:

Food that is highly processed  
Food with added sugars and no nutrients



Children may need to taste, touch and smell new foods many times before accepting them.

# How Much to Feed Your Child

## Younger Infants (0-6 months)

Your young baby needs only breast milk or iron-fortified infant formula to get enough fluids and proper nutrition. The amount you feed depends on your child's needs and hunger cues.



## Older Infants (6-12 months)

Breast milk or iron-fortified infant formula provide enough fluids and nutrition for your older baby. Introduce a variety of food, flavors and textures to help your baby learn to eat. Food is especially important in this stage to support growth and brain development. Your baby only needs 1-2 tablespoons of each food at first and will gradually eat 3-4 tablespoons as she gets older.

Food Group	Number of Servings per Day	What Counts as a Serving
Dairy	Start to introduce	Plain whole milk yogurt and cheese
Vegetables and Fruits	1-2	2-3 tablespoons strained or pureed vegetables and fruits
Grains	2	2-4 tablespoons iron-fortified infant cereal
	1	2 crackers or ½ slice bread
Protein	1-2	1-2 tablespoons strained or pureed meat
		1-2 tablespoons beans

## Toddlers (12-24 months)

Food is the main source of nutrition and energy that your child needs. Breastfeeding can continue if enjoyed by both mother and child. Your child eats small amounts so every bite counts. You can help build trust with your child by responding to your child's hunger and fullness cues.



Food Group	Number of Servings per Day	What Counts as a Serving
Dairy	4-5	½ cup plain whole milk ½ ounce cheese ½ cup plain yogurt
Vegetables	2-3	¼-⅓ cup cooked/canned or fresh chopped vegetables
Fruits	2-3	½ small whole fruit ¼-⅓ cup cooked/canned or chopped fruit ⅓-½ cup berries
Grains	6	¼-½ slice bread or bagel
		⅓-½ cup cereal
		¼-⅓ cup rice/pasta (whole grains are best)
Protein	2	1-3 tablespoons beef, pork, poultry or fish
		2-4 tablespoons beans or chopped nuts and seeds
		1 small egg

## Children & Adolescents (2-18 years)

Children and adolescents have a wide range of calorie and nutrient needs. The amount your child needs depends on age, physical activity and their patterns of growth and development.

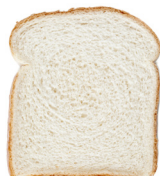
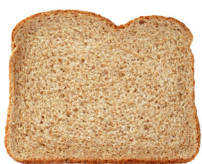


Food Group	Amount per Day			What Counts as a Serving
	Ages 2-8	Ages 9-13	Ages 14-18	
Dairy	2-2 ½ cups	3 cups	3 cups	1 cup milk 1 cup yogurt 2 slices cheese
Vegetables	1-2 ½ cup	1 ½-3 ½ cups	2 ½-4 cups	1 cup sliced or chopped vegetables 2 cups raw leafy greens 1 cup vegetable juice 1 large ear of corn
Fruits	1-2 cups	1 ½-2 cups	1 ½-2 ½ cups	1 cup sliced or chopped fruit 1 cup 100% fruit juice 1 large banana 8 large strawberries
Grains	3-6 ounces	5-9 ounces	6-10 ounces	1 slice bread 1 cup ready-to-eat cereal flakes ½ cup cooked oatmeal, rice or pasta 1 tortilla (6 inches across) (whole grains are best)
Protein	2-5 ½ ounces	4-6 ½ ounces	5-7 ounces	1 ounce cooked meat, poultry or seafood 1 egg 1 tablespoon peanut butter ¼ cup cooked beans or peas (kidney, pinto, lentils)

Source: US Department of Agriculture and US Department of Health and Human Services. Dietary Guidelines for Americans, 2020-2025. 9th Edition. December 2020. Available at <https://www.dietaryguidelines.gov>.

## Choosing Healthier Options

Whole foods are nutrient-dense, meaning they provide many nutrients and the most health benefits.



Whole-grain or whole-wheat bread has more nutrients (like fiber, protein, vitamins and minerals) than refined bread. Choose whole grains more often when possible.



Oranges have more nutrients (like fiber) than orange juice. Some of the same nutrients but not all of the health benefits come from 100% fruit or vegetable juice.

# Sugary Drinks



Drinks with added sugar and no other nutrients can lead to health concerns such as tooth cavities, overweight and obesity, and even increased risk for chronic diseases like type 2 diabetes.

Avoid added sugar until your child is at least 2 years old.

## What you drink matters.

**Milk and water are the healthiest drink choices for children age 1 and older.**



The nutrients in milk (calcium, protein, vitamin A, vitamin D and more) work together to help a child's body grow healthfully and develop strong bones and lean muscle.



## Daily beverage recommendations for children up to age 5

	0-6 months	6-12 months	12-24 months	2-3 years	4-5 years
Plain drinking water	not needed	½-1 cup	1-4 cups	1-4 cups	1 ½-5 cups
Plain, pasteurized milk	not recommended		2-3 cups whole milk	Up to 2 cups fat-free or low-fat milk	Up to 2 ½ cups fat-free or low-fat milk
100% juice	not recommended		Up to ½ cup	Up to ½ cup	Up to ½-¾ cup
Plant milks/non-dairy beverages	not recommended		medical indication/dietary reasons only		
Flavored milk	not recommended				
Toddler milk	not recommended				
Sugar-sweetened beverages	not recommended				
Beverages with low-calorie sweeteners	not recommended				
Caffeinated beverages	not recommended				

# Healthy Meal and Snack Tips

There are many ways to eat healthfully. Food choices are often driven by taste, traditions and availability. Which foods does your family eat?



## Dairy

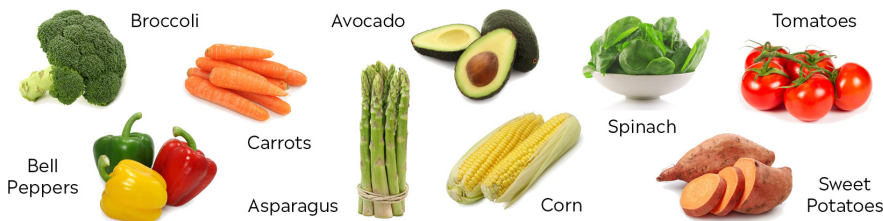
Milk, Yogurt, Cheese



## Meals:

Aim for at least 1 food from each of the 5 food groups.

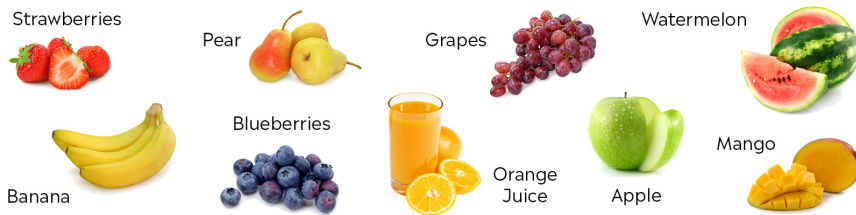
## Vegetables



## Snacks:

Aim for foods from 2-3 of the food groups. Think of snacks as mini meals.

## Fruits



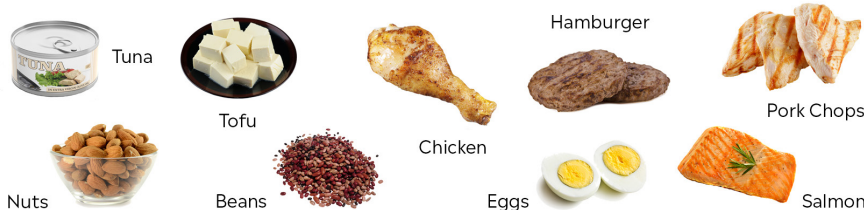
## Grains

Breads, Cereals, Pasta



## Protein

Meat, Beans, Nuts



# How to Help Your Family Learn Healthy Eating Habits

Positive food activities support your child's social and emotional health.



**Shop together:** Pick out new foods together at the grocery store.



**Cook together:** Involve your child in meal prep. Children are more likely to try foods they helped prepare.

**Eat together:** Serve family-style meals and aim to eat at least one meal together as a family most days of the week.



Let your child choose what and how much to eat from the healthy foods you serve.

**What you do:** Decide when to serve food, and what to serve for meals and snacks. Eat from the same healthy foods that you serve your child, who learns by watching you eat.

**What your child will do:** Decide what to eat, and how much, from the foods you offer.



This program aligns with the Dietary Guidelines for Americans. It is one of many nutrition education resources offered by Dairy Council of California for students and adults to improve eating habits. For more information and additional resources, visit [HealthyEating.org](http://HealthyEating.org).

If you need help providing healthy food for your family:

Contact your child's school to find out about the meal programs that provide free or low-cost healthy food to children year-round.



**Women, Infants, and Children (WIC)** can help families with children up to age 5, pregnant women and new mothers. Help is also available for dads, grandparents, foster parents of young children and working families.

Contact WIC:  
1-800-852-5770  
<https://m.wic.ca.gov/>



**Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP)** provides monthly help to families to buy healthy food.

Contact SNAP:  
1-800-221-5689  
<https://www.fns.usda.gov/snap/supplemental-nutrition-assistance-program>

In California, contact CalFresh: 1-877-847-3663