



FOOD Guide PYRAMID

for Young Children

A Daily Guide for
2- to 6-Year-Olds



Preschoolers are not little adults. They are different from adults because they are growing every day. This difference can affect the kinds and amounts of food preschoolers eat from one day to the next.

If children, ages five to six, are offered large amounts of food, they will eat more than they need to grow at a healthy rate.¹ This can lead to excess weight gain or obesity.

Parents or caregivers should learn how much food is suitable for preschool children. The *Food Guide Pyramid for Young Children* can help parents and caregivers know what kind and how much food a preschooler needs to grow at a healthy rate.

Because their tummies are small, children should eat the total servings from all five food groups in **three meals and two snacks every day.**

Fats and sweets are at the top of the pyramid because they add calories but few nutrients. It is okay for children to have these foods now and then, if they are balanced with more nutritious foods. The key is to limit, not restrict, fats and sweets.

For Children Ages 4 to 6:

Give two servings from the Meat Group. One serving equals 2 to 3 ounces of meat, chicken or fish. Food portions that count as one-half of a meat serving include 2 tablespoons of peanut butter, $\frac{1}{2}$ cup of beans, two slices of bologna or one egg.

Give two servings from the Milk Group. One serving equals 1 cup of milk or yogurt or 2 ounces of cheese.

Give three servings from the Vegetable Group. One serving equals $\frac{1}{2}$ cup of cooked vegetables or two cooked broccoli spears.

Give two servings from the Fruit Group. One serving equals one small apple, orange, banana or other fruit; $\frac{3}{4}$ cup of 100 percent juice; or $\frac{1}{2}$ cup canned fruit or applesauce.

Give six servings from the Grain Group. One serving equals one slice of bread, one 7-inch tortilla, $\frac{1}{2}$ cup cooked rice or pasta, $\frac{3}{4}$ cup breakfast cereal, $\frac{1}{2}$ cup oatmeal or grits, six crackers or one 4-inch pancake.

Give smaller portions to children ages 2 to 3.

¹Journal of The American Dietetic Association 2000;100:232-234.

For more on the Food Guide Pyramid:

<http://www.usda.gov/cnpp/KidsPyra/index.htm>

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