of it.

- Continue to offer a variety of other foods at meal and snacktimes.

Refusal to Eat What is Served

- Children sometimes refuse to eat to assert independence, to get attention, or to test their limits. Do not allow mealtime to become a battleground. Encourage your child to eat, but do not use force. An occasional missed meal is not harmful to a healthy child.

- If your child refuses meat, it may be because it is hard to chew. Tough meats, like roast and steak, are hard for a preschool child to chew. Offer softer, easy-to-chew meats and protein-rich foods like chicken, hamburger, or dried cooked beans. Make sure meat is cut into small pieces.

- If your child continues to refuse to eat, he may be ill. Consult your doctor.

Snacks

- Snacks are needed for active toddlers and preschoolers, who usually don't eat a lot at one time. A pattern of three meals and two or three snacks is suggested.

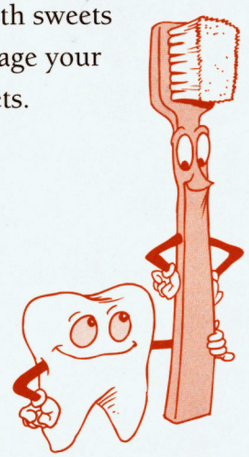
- Fresh fruit, cheese, half a sandwich, dry cereal, crackers, yogurt, bagels, or raw vegetables (for older children) are good snack choices.

Desserts and Sweets

- Fruits, pudding, oatmeal cookies and low-fat ice cream make good, nutritious desserts. Only occasionally offer foods high in sugar and fat, but low in vitamins and minerals, like cookies, cakes and pies.

- Don't bribe or reward children with sweets for good behavior. This may encourage your child to become overly fond of sweets.

- Sweets can lead to tooth decay. Encourage children to brush their teeth after eating sweets.



Finishing Touches

Appetite is linked to the way food looks

ADD MEAL APPEAL – Serve meals made with foods of different colors, shapes, textures, and temperatures. Make foods fun — cut sandwiches with a cookie cutter or make a funny face with raisins and shaved carrots for hair.

LET YOUR CHILD HELP – Children learn best by being actively involved. Encourage your child to be interested in food by letting him help with meals according to his abilities. At first, jobs should be simple — let your child empty ingredients into a mixing bowl, wash the vegetables or set the table. This can be a learning time for your child and a time for *you* to enjoy your child's company.

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Building Good Food Habits for Kids 1-6

Lay a Solid Foundation

Help your young child develop good, healthy eating patterns. Start by buying healthful foods and preparing healthful meals and snacks.

Make Sure Foods Measure Up

A variety of food is important for growing children. Offer a small amount of a new food along with a favorite food. Allow your child to determine how much to eat — a child's appetite will vary from day to day.

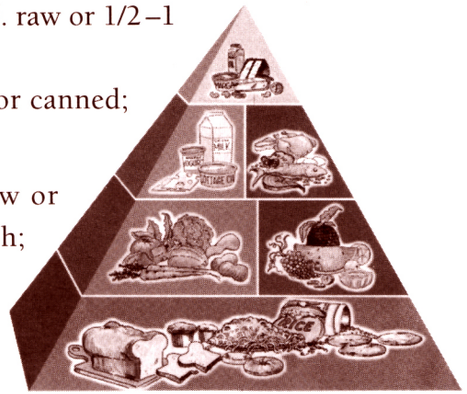
Use the Food Guide Pyramid (below) to help plan healthful meals and snacks. Remember to serve child-size portions.

What's a Child-Size Serving?

Breads, cereals, rice and pasta: 1/2–1 slice bread, dinner roll, muffin or biscuit; 1/2–3/4 c. ready-to-eat cereal; 1/3–1/2 c. cooked cereal, rice, pasta; 2–4 crackers; 1–2 graham cracker squares.

Vegetables: 1/3–1/2 c. raw or 1/2–1 small raw or fresh; 1/3–1/2 c. cooked or canned; 1/3–1/2 c. juice.

Fruit: 1/3–1/2 c. raw or 1 small raw or fresh; 1/3–1/2 c. cooked or canned; 1/3–1/2 c. juice.



Milk/Dairy: 1/2 c. fluid milk, yogurt, pudding; 3/4 oz. natural cheese; 1 oz. American cheese.

Meat/Protein: 1 oz. meat, fish, poultry; 1 egg; 1/2 c. cooked dried beans, peas or lentils; 2 Tbsp. peanut butter.

The larger serving sizes are recommended for the 4 to 6 year-old child.

Foods Kids Like

Finger Foods: Small, bite-size pieces of vegetables, fruits, bread, toast, meat, cheese, hard-cooked egg.

Mild Flavors: No need for salt, sugar, pepper and other seasonings — children have sensitive taste buds. Some favorites are applesauce, bananas, mild cheeses, potatoes, custard, vegetables.

Well-prepared Food: Moist meat, smooth-cooked cereal, crisp raw vegetables. Sometimes children do not like combination dishes like casseroles.

Smoothing Out the Rough Edges

Making Mealtime a Pleasant Experience

Introducing New Foods

- Introduce only one new food at a time in a small amount.
- Cut food into small pieces when possible. It is easier for small fingers to handle.
- Allow plenty of time for your child to examine the food.
- Your child may not want to try a new food the first few times it's offered. This is okay. As children become familiar with a food, they are more likely to try it. Praise your child when a new food is tried.

Food Dislikes

- Children like and dislike certain foods. As long as your child does not omit a whole food group, or only dislikes a few foods, there is no need to worry. As your child grows, taste will change, and dislikes may disappear.
- Continue to offer unpopular foods occasionally. Encourage your child to try the food, but don't force or bribe your child to eat it.
- Try combining an unpopular food with favorites, or prepare the food in a different way. If your child doesn't like cooked carrots, try them raw or with low-fat dressing.

Dawdling or Playing with Food

- Offer help — does your child need help cutting the food?
- Make sure your child is comfortable and not overtired.
- Encourage your child and allow a reasonable amount of time. Remind your child when mealtime is almost done. When a reasonable amount of time has passed, remove the food.

Food Jags

- Sometimes a child will prefer a certain food or food combination. This is normal and okay if the food is nutritious. Food jags usually don't last if you don't make an issue

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