

## Getting Your Child to Eat Right

Establishing healthy eating habits—along with an active lifestyle—during childhood can help prevent diseases such as diabetes, heart disease and cancer. Here’s what you need to know to help your child form good-eating habits that will last a lifetime.

### Food to strive for

Use the Food Guide Pyramid to help you figure out what, and how much, you and your child should eat in order to stay healthy. You also should be sure your child gets enough of these 3 essential nutrients.

- **Calcium** helps build bone mass, which is most important during the teen years. Calcium can be found in dark, leafy green vegetables; however, low-fat milk and milk products are the best sources. Your child should drink three to four glasses of milk a day to meet her calcium requirements.
- **Iron** deficiency can lead to fatigue, irritability, headaches, lack of energy and tingling in the hands and feet and can be prevented by eating an iron-rich diet that includes lean meat, fish and poultry.
- **Fiber** contributes to healthy bowel function and can reduce your child’s risk for cancer and heart disease later in life. Fruits, vegetables and whole-grain breads and cereals are good sources.

### Food to avoid

Limit sugars, caffeine and high-fat snacks, which contain little nutritional value. Fruit-flavored drinks are especially high in “empty” calories. Also avoid adding excessive salt.

### Putting it all together

Getting a healthy meal on the table—and then getting your child to eat it— isn’t always easy. But, giving in to your kid’s pleas for fast food “just to get him to eat something” is never a good idea.

Try these tips and remember that your child’s best role model is you.

- Start the day out right with breakfast. According to the American Dietetic Association, kids who eat breakfast perform better in school. To make mornings less hectic, put out bowls, spoons, cups, low-fat, low-sugar cereals and bagels the night before. Add milk, orange juice and other fruit in the morning for a complete breakfast.
- Add variety to your kid’s lunch by adding such foods as hard-boiled eggs, baked beans, low-fat bran muffins, cottage cheese and yogurt. “Wraps” are a fun way to bundle healthful foods—such as grilled veggies; black beans, corn and salsa; or peanut butter, banana and honey—in whole-wheat or veggie tortillas.
- Treat your child to a snack of fruits and veggies served with a tasty yogurt, cottage cheese or cream cheese dip. Other healthful snacks include microwave popcorn (low-salt, low-fat variety), graham crackers, raisins, yogurt and pretzels.
- Involve the whole family in dinner by allowing your child to help with menu planning, shopping and food preparation.

### Special concerns

Overweight children, children with eating disorders and picky eaters are a special concern to parents. Talk to your family doctor or pediatrician for tips on how to deal with these issues.

Sources: National Institute for Child Health and Human Development, National Cancer Institute, The Nemours Foundation, Children's Nutrition Research Center of Baylor College of Medicine, American Dietetic Association

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