
INSIGHTS

FOR FAMILIES

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Your children's nutrition

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- ❖ **INSIGHTS FOR FAMILIES** is provided by your child's school in recognition of your role as a partner in education.

Adapted by Judy McDaniel, communications consultant, from information provided on keepkidshealthy.com.

Your children's nutrition is important to their overall health. Proper nutrition can also prevent many medical problems, including becoming overweight, developing weak bones, and developing diabetes. It will also ensure that your children physically grow to their full potential.

You can also help promote good nutrition by setting a good example. Healthy eating habits and regular exercise should be a part of your family's life. It is much easier if everyone in the house follows these guidelines, than if your children have to do it alone. You should also buy low-calorie and low-fat meals, snacks and desserts, low fat or skim milk and diet drinks. Avoid buying high calorie desserts or snacks, such as snack chips, regular soft drinks or regular ice cream.

The best nutrition advice to keep your children healthy includes encouraging them to:

- ❖ Eat a variety of foods.
- ❖ Balance the food they eat with physical activity.
- ❖ Choose a diet with plenty of grain products, vegetables and fruits.
- ❖ Choose a diet low in fat, saturated fat, and cholesterol.
- ❖ Choose a diet moderate in sugars and salt.
- ❖ Choose a diet that provides enough calcium and iron to meet their growing body's requirements.

The Food Guide Pyramid was designed by the US Dept. of Agriculture to promote healthy nutrition in children over two years of age. It is meant to be a general guide to daily food choices and has recently been updated so that it can be customized to a person's age, gender, and activity level, which combine to determine their calorie level and the recommended amounts of 'servings' from each food group.

The main emphasis of the Food Pyramid is on the five major food groups, all of which are required for good health. It also emphasizes that foods that include a lot of fats, oils and sweets should be used very sparingly.

The Food Guide Pyramid shows a range of servings for each food group. How much you actually eat depends on your age and activity level. Teenage boys who are active require about 2800 calories and should eat the highest range of servings. Teenage girls who are active require about 2200 calories and should eat servings in the middle of the range of servings. Children who are overweight and dieting should at least eat the lowest range of servings.

When determining how many servings to eat, it is important to look at the serving size. Larger portions should count as more than one serving, and smaller portions will count as only a part of a serving.

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For more information about the Food Guide Pyramid, visit www.keepkidshealthy.com.

Other tips from the Food Guide Pyramid:

In addition to making healthy choices and following the recommendations from each food group based on your children's age, gender, and activity level, you should:

- ❖ Choose and prepare foods and beverages with little added sugars or caloric sweeteners.
- ❖ Avoid saturated fats and trans fats.
- ❖ Choose and prepare foods with little salt.
- ❖ Choose nutrient-dense foods that provide substantial amounts of vitamins and minerals and relatively fewer calories.
- ❖ Encourage children and teens to engage in at least 60 minutes of physical activity on most, preferably all, days of the week.
- ❖ Don't go over your daily limit of discretionary calories.