



Healthy Children (/English) > Healthy Living (<https://www.healthychildren.org/English/healthy-living>) > Nutrition (<https://www.healthychildren.org/English/healthy-living/nutrition>) > Choosing Healthy Snacks

HEALTHY LIVING

Choosing Healthy Snacks

Snacks: The Well-Stocked Kitchen

Low-fat yogurt	Low-fat pudding
Fresh fruit	1%-fat or skim milk
High-fiber, unsweetened cereals	Low-fat cottage cheese
Nuts	Dried fruit
Low-fat microwave popcorn	Rice cakes
Reduced-fat cheese	Whole-grain crackers
Peanut butter	Whole wheat bread
Bagels	Pita bread
Low-fat lunch meats, cold cuts	Reduced-fat mayonnaise or fat-free dressings
Pretzels	Baked snack chips
Tofu	Microwaveable, low-fat entrees (eg, enchiladas, burritos, pasta with chunky tomato and vegetable sauce)
Bean dip, chickpea spread (hummus), eggplant dip	Salsa
Low-fat granola bars	Prepackaged, pre-cut vegetables with low-fat dips

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Healthy Children (/English) > Healthy Living (<https://www.healthychildren.org/English/healthy-living>) > Nutrition (<https://www.healthychildren.org/English/healthy-living/nutrition>) > Are Your Kids Hungry or Just Bored?

HEALTHY LIVING

Are Your Kids Hungry or Just Bored?

Children (as well as adults) often use food for reasons other than to satisfy hunger. Children often eat in response to their emotions and feelings ([/English/health-issues/conditions/emotional-problems/Pages/Emotional-Eating.aspx](#)).

If your child seems hungry all the time, use the following tips to get a better idea of what is really going on.



What Triggers Hunger?

If your child is eating 3 well-balanced meals and 1 snack a day but still claims to be hungry, there may be other reasons beyond hunger that make him or her want to eat.

What You Can Do

Ask yourself the following questions:

- Does your child sometimes reach for food when experiencing any of the following?
 - Boredom
 - Depression ([/English/health-issues/conditions/emotional-problems/Pages/Childhood-Depression.aspx](#))
 - Stress ([/English/healthy-living/emotional-wellness/Pages/Helping-Children-Handle-Stress.aspx](#))
 - Frustration
 - Insecurity
 - Loneliness
 - Fatigue ([/English/health-issues/conditions/chronic/Pages/Chronic-Fatigue-Syndrome.aspx](#))
 - Resentment
 - Anger ([/English/healthy-living/emotional-wellness/Pages/Everybody-Gets-Mad-Helping-Your-Child-Cope-with-Conflict.aspx](#))
 - Happiness
- Does your child eat at times other than regular mealtimes and snacks? Is your child **munching** ([/English/health-issues/conditions/obesity/Pages/Snacking-and-Grazing.aspx](#)) at every opportunity?
- Do you reward ([/English/ages-stages/toddler/toilet-training/Pages/Will-Pee-for-Food.aspx](#)) your child with food (*does an A on a test sometimes lead to a trip to the ice cream shop*)? This can inadvertently contribute to your child's obesity.
- When your child is doing things right, do you tell him or her? Words of approval can boost a child's self-esteem ([/English/ages-stages/gradeschool/Pages/Helping-Your-Child-Develop-A-Healthy-Sense-of-Self-Esteem.aspx](#)). They can also help keep a child motivated to continue making the right decisions for health and weight.
- How are you speaking to your child? Is it mostly negative? Is it often critical? It's hard for anyone, including children, to make changes in that kind of environment.

Healthy Alternatives

If you suspect your child is eating out of boredom, you may need to steer him or her toward other activities as a distraction.

What You Can Do

- Make sure your child is eating 3 well-balanced meals and 1 snack a day. This will prevent feelings of hunger between meals.
- Help your child choose other things to do instead of eating, such as:
 - Walking the dog
 - Running through the sprinklers
 - Playing a game of badminton
 - Kicking a soccer (</English/healthy-living/sports/Pages/Soccer.aspx>) ball
 - Painting a picture
 - Going in-line skating
 - Dancing (</English/healthy-living/sports/Pages/Ballet-and-Dance.aspx>)
 - Planting a flower in the garden
 - Flying a kite
 - Joining you for a walk through the mall (*without stopping at the ice cream shop*)
- Offer healthy snacks (</English/healthy-living/nutrition/Pages/Choosing-Healthy-Snacks.aspx>) such as raw vegetables, fruit, light microwave popcorn, vegetable soup, sugar-free gelatin, and fruit snacks. Snacks such as chips and candy bars have empty calories that will not make your child feel full.
- You pick the snack. When children are allowed to pick their own snacks, they often make unhealthy choices. Talk to your child about why healthy snacks are important. Come up with a list of snacks that you can both agree on and have them on hand.

Remember

Your own relationship with food and weight, dating back to your childhood, can influence the way you parent your own child. One of your biggest challenges is to determine whether your child is eating for the right reasons.

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Healthy Children (/English) > Healthy Living (<https://www.healthychildren.org/English/healthy-living>) > Nutrition (<https://www.healthychildren.org/English/healthy-living/nutrition>) > Avoiding Food Traps

HEALTHY LIVING

Avoiding Food Traps

Food traps are situations and places that make it difficult to eat right. We all have them. The following tips may help your family avoid some of the most common traps.



Food Trap #1: Vacations, Holidays, and Other Family Gatherings

Vacations

When on a trip, don't take a vacation (</English/family-life/work-play/Pages/Managing-School-Holidays-and-Vacations.aspx>) from healthy eating (</English/healthy-living/nutrition/Pages/Eating-for-Good-Health.aspx>) and exercise (</English/healthy-living/fitness/Pages/Exercise-Important-for-the-Whole-Family.aspx>).

What You Can Do:

- Plan your meals (</English/ages-stages/gradeschool/nutrition/Pages/Making-Healthy-Food-Choices.aspx>). Will all your meals be from restaurants (</English/ages-stages/preschool/nutrition-fitness/Pages/Eating-Out-Without-Reservations.aspx>)? If so, can you split entrees and desserts to keep portions (</English/healthy-living/nutrition/Pages/Portions-and-Serving-Sizes.aspx>) from getting too large? Can you avoid fast food (</English/ages-stages/teen/nutrition/Pages/Healthy-and-Unhealthy-Choices-at-Fast-Food-Restaurants.aspx>)? Can you bring along your own healthy snacks (</English/healthy-living/nutrition/Pages/Choosing-Healthy-Snacks.aspx>)?
- Stay active. Schedule time for physical activities such as taking a walk or swimming (</English/safety-prevention/at-play/Pages/Swimming-Pool-Safety.aspx>) in the hotel pool.

Holidays

It's easy to overeat during holidays. But you don't need to fear or avoid them.

What You Can Do:

- Approach the holidays with extra care. Don't lose sight of what you and your child are eating. Plan to have healthy foods and snacks on hand. Bring a fruit or veggie tray with you when you go to friends and family.
- Celebrate for the day, not an entire month! Be sure to return to healthy eating the next day.

Other Family Gatherings

In some cultures, when extended families get together, it can turn into a food feast, from morning to night.

What You Can Do:

- Eat smaller portions. Avoid overeating whenever you get together with family. Try taking small portions instead.

- Get family support. Grandparents, aunts, and uncles can have an enormous effect on your child's health. Let them know that you'd like their help in keeping your child on the road to good health.

Food Trap #2: Snack Time

The biggest time for snacking is after school. Kids come home wound up, stressed out, or simply bored, so they reach for food.

What You Can Do:

- Offer healthy snacks such as raw vegetables, fruit, light microwave popcorn, vegetable soup, sugar-free gelatin, or fruit snacks.
- You pick the snack. When children are allowed to pick their own snacks, they often make unhealthy choices. Talk to your child about why healthy snacks are important. Come up with a list of snacks that you can both agree on and have them on hand.
- Keep your child entertained. Help your child come up with other things to do instead of eating, such as playing outside, dancing, painting a picture, flying a kite, or taking a walk with you.
- Make sure your child eats 3 well-balanced meals a day. This will help cut down on the number of times he or she needs a snack.

Food Trap #3: Running Out of Time

Finding time every day to be physically active can be very difficult. However, if you plan ahead, there are ways to fit it in.

What You Can Do:

- Make a plan. Sit down with your child and plan in advance for those days when it seems impossible to find even 15 minutes for physical activity ([/English/health-issues/conditions/obesity/Pages/Physical-Activity-Better-Health.aspx](#)). Have a plan B ready that your child can do after dark, such as exercising to a workout video.
- Make easy dinners. If you run out of time to make dinner, don't run to the nearest fast-food restaurant. Remember, dinners don't have to be elaborate. They can be as simple as a sandwich, bowl of soup, piece of fruit, and glass of milk ([/English/healthy-living/nutrition/Pages/Pasteurized-Milk-Myths-and-Proven-Facts.aspx](#)).

Remember

Your job is to provide good nutrition to your child and family and encourage regular physical activity. Stay positive and focus on how well your child is doing in all areas of life. It can help keep nutrition and activity change moving along.

Author Sandra G. Hassink, MD, FAAP

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AGES & STAGES

How to Reduce Fat and Cholesterol in Your Child's Diet

Family eating habits determine what your child will learn to eat and enjoy. Here are some ways you and your family can limit fat and cholesterol in your diets:



- Keep fresh fruits and vegetables available.
- Serve whole-grain bread and cereals.
- Rely on low-fat milk and low-fat yogurt. Select cheeses that are lower in fat, for example.
- Include starchy foods (potatoes, pasta, rice) in your meals.
- Avoid high-fat and high-calorie toppings, including butter, margarine, sour cream, and gravy. Instead, use herbed cottage cheese, grated parmesan cheese, or low-fat yogurt as toppings.
- Serve lean meats, such as chicken, turkey, fish, lean beef cuts (lean hamburger, top loin, top round, eye of round), and lean pork cuts (tenderloin, loin, chops, ham). Cut away visible fat and remove the skin from poultry.
- Select margarine and vegetable oils (canola, corn, olive, sunflower, and soybean oils).
- Choose frozen fruit bars, angel food cake, or low-fat frozen yogurt instead of rich, creamy desserts.
- When cooking, use nonstick vegetable sprays to cut down on added fat.
- Choose fat-free cooking techniques, such as baking, broiling, poaching, grilling, or steaming when preparing meat, fish, and poultry. Do not use butter or margarine when preparing or serving vegetables.
- Serve vegetable-based and broth-based soups. Choose low-fat milk when making cream soups.

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Healthy Children (/English) > Healthy Living (<https://www.healthychildren.org/English/healthy-living>) > Nutrition (<https://www.healthychildren.org/English/healthy-living/nutrition>) > Kids Need Fiber: Here's Why and How

HEALTHY LIVING

Kids Need Fiber: Here's Why and How

Fiber is an important nutrient that most children (and parents) are not getting enough of each day. As parents, you do your best to feed your family healthy foods (</English/ages-stages/gradeschool/nutrition/Pages/Making-Healthy-Food-Choices.aspx>), but you may need help with choosing good sources of fiber.



How Much Fiber Do Children Need?

There are different fiber recommendations for children based on energy needs, age, or weight.

- **Eat 5.** A simple way to make sure your children are getting enough fiber is by making healthful food choices. If your children are eating at least 5 servings of fruits and vegetables each day along with other foods that are good sources of fiber, there is really no need to count fiber grams.
- **Add 5.** If you find it helpful to keep track of numbers, add 5 to your children's age. For example, a 5-year-old would need about 10 grams of fiber each day. **Note:** The total daily recommended amount of up to 25 grams for adults can be used as a general guideline for children.

Why is Fiber Important?

Fiber helps make us full and keeps things moving in the digestive tract. A diet that includes good sources of fiber may help prevent constipation (</English/health-issues/conditions/abdominal/Pages/Constipation.aspx>). These foods also are good sources of nutrients and vitamins (</English/healthy-living/nutrition/Pages/Where-We-Stand-Vitamins.aspx>) that may help reduce the risk of heart disease (</English/health-issues/conditions/heart/Pages/Heart-Disease.aspx>), certain types of cancer (</English/health-issues/conditions/cancer/Pages/default.aspx>), and obesity (</English/health-issues/conditions/obesity/Pages/default.aspx>).

Good sources of fiber include:

- Vegetables
- Fruit
- Beans
- Peas
- Nuts
- Fiber-rich whole-grain breads and cereals

How Do You Read Nutrition Facts?

Nutrition Facts can tell you all about the nutrients and ingredients in a food. Nutrition Facts can help you choose foods that provide the nutrition that's right for you, including fiber. **Dietary fiber** is a nutrient listed under "Total Carbohydrate" on the Nutrition Facts.

- Excellent sources of fiber have 5 or more grams of fiber per serving.
- Good sources of fiber have at least 3 grams of fiber per serving.

Nutrition Facts		
Serving Size 21 Biscuits (54g)		
Amount Per Serving		
	Amount	% Daily Value*
Calories	190	230
Calories from Fat	10	10
Total Fat 1g 2% 2%		
Saturated Fat 0g 0% 0%		
Trans Fat 0g		
Polyunsaturated Fat 0.5g		
Monounsaturated Fat 0g		
Cholesterol	0mg	0% 0%
Sodium	0mg	0% 3%
Potassium	200mg	6% 11%
Total Carbohydrate	46g	15% 17%
Dietary Fiber	6g	23% 23%
Sugars	11g	
Protein	5g	

If a food company makes a claim about the fiber of a food, the grams of fiber must be listed under "Total Carbohydrate."

Look at the list of ingredients if you want to know if a food is made with whole grains.

Not all foods labeled "whole grain" (/English/healthy-living/nutrition/Pages/Whole-

Grains.aspx) are a good source of fiber. Grains vary widely in their fiber content. For example, whole-grain wheat has more fiber than whole-grain brown rice or whole-grain oats.

- The amount of fiber in a whole-grain food can vary by brand.
- Whole grains include whole wheat, brown rice, bulgur, buckwheat, oatmeal, whole-grain cornmeal, whole oats, whole rye, and wild rice.

"Whole grain" on a food label means that some whole grain is included. Remember to select foods with whole grains that also are good sources of fiber.

Protein 5g		
Vitamin A	0%	4%
Vitamin C	0%	0%
Calcium	0%	15%
Iron	90%	90%
Thiamin	25%	30%
Riboflavin	25%	35%
Niacin	25%	25%
Vitamin B6	25%	25%
Folic Acid	50%	50%
Vitamin B12	25%	35%
Phosphorus	15%	25%
Magnesium	10%	15%
Zinc	10%	15%
Copper	10%	10%

Ingredients: Whole grain wheat, sugar, contains 2% or less of brown rice syrup, gelatin, BHT for freshness.

Additional Information

- [Fiber: An Important Part of Your Teen's Diet \(/English/ages-stages/teen/nutrition/Pages/Fiber-An-Important-Part-of-Your-Teens-Diet.aspx\)](#)
- [Front of Package Nutrition Labels \(/English/healthy-living/nutrition/Pages/Front-of-Package-Nutrition-Labels.aspx\)](#)
- [Breakfast Poster: 7 Days 7 Ways to Fit Fiber into Your Morning Menu \(/Documents/tips-tools/Immunization%20Schedules/AAP_BREAKFAST_POSTER.pdf\)\(PDF\)](#)
- www.nutrition.gov/whats-food (<http://www.nutrition.gov/whats-food>) - If you want to know how much fiber is in a food that does not have a Nutrition Facts label, you can look it up here!

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Healthy Children (/English) > Healthy Living (<https://www.healthychildren.org/English/healthy-living>) > Nutrition (<https://www.healthychildren.org/English/healthy-living/nutrition>) > Avoiding Trans Fats

HEALTHY LIVING

Avoiding Trans Fats

To create a substitute for butter, food manufacturers put vegetable oils through a process called *hydrogenation*. The addition of hydrogen makes the product firm and resistant to spoilage. However, while hydrogenated or trans fats spread like butter, they also share some of the unwanted properties of saturated fats. They appear to interfere with removing LDL (“bad”) cholesterol (</English/ages-stages/gradeschool/nutrition/Pages/High-Cholesterol-Levels-in-Children.aspx>) from the blood and also lower HDL (“good”) cholesterol. As a result, these foods may contribute to heart disease (</English/health-issues/conditions/heart/pages/Heart-Disease.aspx>) and certain cancers (</English/health-issues/conditions/cancer/Pages/default.aspx>).



To lower your children’s consumption of saturated fats, avoid trans fats and use liquid oils and soft tub margarines instead. Since 2006, the Food and Drug Administration has required food manufacturers to list the amount of trans fats in the *Nutrition Facts* section of food labels (</English/ages-stages/gradeschool/nutrition/Pages/Nutritional-Information-on-Food-Labels-What-it-All-Means.aspx>), so always check labels for trans fat content. In some cities, local ordinances have been passed to eliminate trans fats in restaurant foods (</English/ages-stages/preschool/nutrition-fitness/Pages/Eating-Out-Without-Reservations.aspx>).

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Healthy Children (/English) > Healthy Living (<https://www.healthychildren.org/English/healthy-living>) > Nutrition (<https://www.healthychildren.org/English/healthy-living/nutrition>) > The 5 Food Groups: Sample Choices

HEALTHY LIVING

The 5 Food Groups: Sample Choices

Every food group is important to providing essential nutrients and energy that can support normal growth and good health.

Choose foods that have a high content of nutrients (protein, vitamins, and minerals) compared with the amount of calories, fat, and sodium content.



Sample Food Choices*

Food group	Types of foods
Grains	<p>Whole grains: brown rice, buckwheat, bulgur (cracked wheat), oatmeal, popcorn^b, whole grain barley, whole grain cornmeal, whole rye, whole wheat bread, whole wheat crackers, whole wheat pasta, whole wheat cereal flakes, whole wheat tortillas, wild rice</p> <p>Other products: mostly made from refined grains; however, some may be made from whole grains (check the ingredients for “whole grain” or “whole wheat”): cornbread, corn tortillas, couscous, crackers, flour tortillas, pasta, pitas, pretzels, ready-to-eat cereals</p>
Vegetables ^b	<p>Dark green vegetables: bok choy, broccoli, collard greens, kale, spinach</p> <p>Red and orange vegetables: acorn squash, butternut squash, carrots, pumpkin, red peppers, sweet potatoes, tomatoes, tomato juice</p> <p>Starchy vegetables: corn, green peas, potatoes</p> <p>Other vegetables: artichokes, asparagus, avocado, bean sprouts, beets, brussels sprouts, cabbage, cauliflower, celery, cucumbers, eggplant, green and red peppers, jicama, mushrooms, okra, onions, snow peas, string beans, tomatoes, vegetable juices, zucchini</p>
Fruit ^b	<p>Apples, applesauce, apricots, bananas, berries (strawberries, blueberries, raspberries), figs, 100% fruit juices (/English/healthy-living/nutrition/Pages/Fruit-Juice-and-Your-Childs-Diet.aspx) (unsweetened), grapefruit, grapes, kiwi fruit, mangoes, melons (cantaloupe, honeydew, watermelon), nectarines, oranges, papayas, peaches, pears, plums, pineapple, raisins, prunes, starfruit, tangerines. Many of these can be offered as dried fruits as well.</p>

Meat, poultry, fish, dry beans, eggs, and nuts^b **Meats:** lean cuts of beef, veal, pork, ham, and lamb; reduced-fat deli meats

Poultry: skinless chicken and turkey, ground chicken and turkey

Fish: salmon, trout, and herring are rich in omega-3 fatty acids; clams, crab, lobster, mussels, octopus, oysters, scallops, squid (calamari), canned tuna fish

Beans: cooked beans (black beans, black-eyed peas, kidney beans, lentils, pinto beans); refried beans (made without lard); tofu (bean curd made from soy beans)

Nuts and seeds: peanut butter; sunflower seeds, almonds, and hazelnuts are rich in vitamin E

Eggs: chicken eggs, duck eggs

Dairy Low-fat milk, yogurt, cheese (such as cheddar, mozzarella, Swiss, parmesan, string cheese, cottage cheese), pudding, frozen yogurt, and ice milk. Calcium-fortified soymilk (soy beverage) is also part of the Dairy Group.

^aSource: United States Department of Agriculture ChooseMyPlate.gov. Accessed June 8, 2011.

^bNote: Do not feed children younger than 4 years round, firm food unless it is chopped completely. The following foods are choking hazards: nuts and seeds; chunks of meat or cheese; hot dogs; whole grapes; fruit chunks (such as apples); popcorn; raw vegetables; hard, gooey, or sticky candy; and chewing gum. Peanut butter can be a choking hazard for children younger than 2.

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Healthy Children (/English) > Healthy Living (<https://www.healthychildren.org/English/healthy-living>) > Nutrition (<https://www.healthychildren.org/English/healthy-living/nutrition>) > What About Fat and Cholesterol?

HEALTHY LIVING

What About Fat and Cholesterol?

Many Americans consume too many calories and too much fat, especially saturated fat, trans fat (/English/healthy-living/nutrition/Pages/Avoiding-Trans-Fats.aspx), and sugar. These eating patterns are one cause of America's high rates of obesity (/english/health-issues/conditions/obesity/Pages/default.aspx) and heart disease (/English/health-issues/conditions/heart/Pages/Heart-Disease.aspx).



As a parent or caregiver, you can help your child develop healthy habits that can last a lifetime. Although many things influence children, adults are still the most important role models. The single-best predictor of a child with a healthy weight and lifestyle is parents who set a good example by making healthy food choices (/English/ages-stages/gradeschool/nutrition/Pages/Making-Healthy-Food-Choices.aspx) and engaging in regular physical activity (/English/ages-stages/gradeschool/fitness/Pages/Promoting-Physical-Activity-as-a-Way-of-Life.aspx). If heart disease runs in your family, your child is at greater risk for heart disease in adulthood, making this even more important.

Read on for information from the American Academy of Pediatrics about fat in food and healthier food choices. If you have specific questions about your child's nutrition, talk with your child's doctor or a registered dietitian.

Fat in Food: How Much for Children?

Childhood is the best time to start heart-healthy eating habits. But eating healthy for most children doesn't mean following adult goals for cutting back on total fat, saturated fat, trans fat, and cholesterol, particularly for children younger than 2 years. Fat is an essential nutrient that supplies the energy, or calories, children need for growth and active play and should not be severely restricted.

However, if your child is younger than 2 years and overweight or at risk for overweight, or has a family history of high cholesterol or heart disease, reduced saturated fat dietary choices may be appropriate. Check with your child's doctor or a registered dietitian before restricting fat in your child's diet. Between the ages of 2 and 5 years, encourage children to gradually choose foods with less fat, saturated fat, and trans fat. By age 5, their overall food choices, like yours, should include heart-healthy foods such as low-fat dairy products, skinless chicken, fish, lean red meats, whole grains (/English/healthy-living/nutrition/Pages/Whole-Grains.aspx), fruits, and vegetables.

NOTE: Restricting a child's eating too much may harm growth and development or encourage undesirable eating behaviors. Before making any drastic changes in a child's eating plan or physical activity habits, talk with your child's doctor or a registered dietitian. If your child is younger than 2 years and obese or overweight, consult your child's doctor before restricting fat or calories, such as with reduced-fat milk.

How is Saturated Fat Different Than Other Fat?

Saturated fat is usually solid at room temperature, compared with liquid fats like oil that contain unsaturated fats. Saturated fats come mostly from animal sources, such as butter, cheese, bacon, and meat, as well as stick margarine. Polyunsaturated and

monounsaturated fats are found in vegetables and fruits (for example, olives, soy beans, nuts). Trans fats are fats that begin as good fats but are chemically changed to keep foods fresh for longer; unfortunately, they can be bad for your cholesterol levels. They are found in baked goods and processed foods. Reading nutrition information labels and ingredients to look for saturated and trans fats can help you determine how much of these fats are present in a particular food.

Milk – Whole or Reduced-fat?

The following are guidelines about what type of milk to give your child.

Age	Type of Milk
Younger than 12 months	Breast milk is best; iron-fortified formula should be used if breast milk is not available.
12 to 24 months	Whole milk. Your child's doctor may recommend reduced-fat (2%) or low-fat (1%) milk if your child is obese or overweight, or if there is a family history of high cholesterol or heart disease. Check with your child's doctor or a registered dietitian before switching from whole to reduced-fat milk. Note: Breastfeeding can continue after 12 months of age as long as is desired by mom and baby.
Older than 24 months	Low-fat (1%) or nonfat (skim) milk

Cholesterol—Where Does it Come From?

Cholesterol is made by your body to help form the walls of cells and organs. It is an important part of the brain and nervous system. The liver converts fat that you eat into cholesterol. Cholesterol also comes from your diet; it is found in large amounts in shrimp, octopus (calamari), and organ meats such as liver. Eggs ([/English/healthy-living/nutrition/Pages/All-About-Eggs.aspx](#)) also contain cholesterol in lesser amounts.

Good Nutrition for the Whole Family

Chances are that some of your child's favorite foods are higher in fat and energy (or calories) compared with the amount of nutrients they provide. Try to select foods that have a high content of nutrients (protein, vitamins, and minerals) compared with the amount of calories, fat, and salt. For example,

- Have plenty of fresh fruits and vegetables available and ready to eat. Washing and preparing these ahead of time may make it more likely your family will eat them.
- Include high-fiber, whole-grain foods such as brown rice, whole-grain pasta, corns, peas, and breads and cereals at meals. Sweet potatoes are also a good choice.
- Choose lower-fat or fat-free toppings like grated low-fat parmesan cheese, salsa, herbed cottage cheese, nonfat/low-fat gravy, low-fat sour cream, low-fat salad dressing, or yogurt.
- Select lean meats such as skinless chicken and turkey, fish, lean beef cuts (round, sirloin, chuck, loin, lean ground beef—no more than 15% fat content), and lean pork cuts (tenderloin, chops, ham). Buy "choice" or "select" grades of beef rather than "prime." Trim off all visible fat. Remove skin from cooked poultry before eating.
- Include healthy oils such as canola or olive oil in your diet. Choose margarine and vegetable oils without trans fats made from canola, corn, sunflower, soybean, or olive oils. Choose tub and liquid margarine rather than stick margarine, which contains trans fats.
- Use nonstick vegetable sprays when cooking.
- Use fat-free cooking methods such as baking, broiling, grilling, poaching, or steaming when cooking meat, poultry, or fish.
- Serve vegetable- and broth-based soups, or use nonfat (skim) or low-fat (1%) milk or evaporated skim milk when making cream soups.
- Use the Nutrition Facts label ([/English/healthy-living/nutrition/Pages/Front-of-Package-Nutrition-Labels.aspx](#)) on food packages to find foods with less saturated fat per serving. Pay attention to the serving size as you make choices. Remember that the percent daily values on food labels are based on portion sizes and calorie levels for adults.

Food tips

The following are ways to make good food choices when considering fat, saturated fat, and cholesterol in food choices

Food Group*	Most Days	Once in a while
Grains	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Whole-grain mini bagel or English muffin Whole-grain chip or breads high in fiber Low-sugar, high-fiber granola bars and baked goods 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Donut or Danish Fried potato or corn chips Cookie or cupcake
Vegetable	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Several servings of raw and cooked vegetables 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> French fries Creamy cole slaw
Fruit	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Several servings of fresh fruit, dried fruit, and 100% fruit juice[†] 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Pies or desserts with fruit
Milk, yogurt, and cheese	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Low-fat (1%) or nonfat (skim) milk Reduced-fat cottage cheese or reduced-fat cheese 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ice cream, milkshakes
Meat, poultry, fish, dry beans, eggs, and nuts	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Baked or grilled skinless chicken Baked or grilled fish Vegetable "burgers" Beans, eggs, nuts, seeds, peanut butter (1 to 2 tablespoons) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Fried fish sticks Fried chicken Fried chicken nuggets

*Do not feed children younger than 4 years round, firm food unless it is chopped completely. The following foods are choking hazards: nuts and seeds, chunks of meat or cheese, hot dogs, whole grapes, fruit chunks (such as apples), popcorn, raw vegetables, hard, gooey, or sticky candy, and chewing gum. Peanut butter can be a choking hazard for children younger than 2.

†The American Academy of Pediatrics recommends that juice be limited to 4 to 6 ounces per day for children 1 to 6 years of age, and 8 to 12 ounces per day for children 7 to 18 years of age.

Serving Up Healthier Food Choices

It's important for children and adults to be sensible and enjoy all foods but not to overdo it on one type of food. Also, no food should be forced or forbidden. When children think a food is forbidden by their parents, it often becomes more desirable. However, children should know that sweets and higher-fat snack foods (/English/healthy-living/nutrition/Pages/Choosing-Healthy-Snacks.aspx) in appropriate portions are OK once in a while.

Active Play is Important Too!

Physical activity, along with proper nutrition (/english/healthy-living/nutrition/Pages/default.aspx), promotes lifelong health. Active play is the best exercise for kids! Parents can join their children and have fun while being active too. Some fun activities for parents and kids to do together include playing on swings, riding tricycles or bicycles (/English/safety-prevention/at-play/Pages/What-Kids-Should-Know-When-Bike-Riding.aspx), jumping rope, flying a kite, making a snowman, swimming (/English/healthy-living/sports/Pages/Swimming.aspx), or dancing (/English/healthy-living/sports/Pages/Ballet-and-Dance.aspx). The daily recommendation for exercise for children (adults also) is at least 1 hour per day. This takes commitment from parents, but the rewards are time together and better health.

For More Information

- **Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics**
 - www.eatright.org (<http://www.eatright.org/>)
 - www.kidseatright.org (<http://www.kidseatright.org/>)
- **US Department of Agriculture and other federal government agencies**
 - www.nutrition.gov (<http://nutrition.gov/>) (includes information about the new food group symbol, MyPlate, which replaces MyPyramid)

Developed in collaboration with the Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics (formerly American Dietetic Association).

Listing of resources does not imply an endorsement by the American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP). The AAP is not responsible for the content of the resources mentioned in this publication. Phone numbers and Web site addresses are as current as possible, but may change at any time.

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Healthy Children (/English) > Health Issues (<https://www.healthychildren.org/English/health-issues>) > Conditions (<https://www.healthychildren.org/English/health-issues/conditions>) > Heart (<https://www.healthychildren.org/English/health-issues/conditions/heart>) > Heart Disease: Reduce Your Child's Risk

HEALTH ISSUES

Heart Disease: Reduce Your Child's Risk

Heredity is clearly an important risk factor for conditions such as heart disease, cancer, and diabetes. However, researchers are steadily gathering strong evidence about how diet influence development of diseases. Experts agree that healthy eating habits from an early age can lower the risk of developing several deadly diseases later on. A diet designed to lower the risk of heart disease, diabetes, and other serious diseases is one that benefits the whole family, adults and children alike.



Risk Factors for Heart Disease

Heart disease is the number one killer of men and women in the United States and most industrialized countries. The chief risk factors are:

- Smoking (</English/health-issues/conditions/tobacco/Pages/Smoking-Hurts-Everyone.aspx>)
- High blood pressure (</English/health-issues/conditions/heart/Pages/High-Blood-Pressure-in-Children.aspx>)
- Diabetes (</English/health-issues/conditions/chronic/Pages/Type-2-Diabetes-A-Manageable-Epidemic.aspx>)
- High blood level of cholesterol (</English/healthy-living/nutrition/Pages/Cholesterol-Levels-in-Children-and-Adolescents.aspx>)
- Physical inactivity (</English/family-life/Media/Pages/What-Children-are-NOT-Doing-When-Watching-TV.aspx>)
- Obesity (</English/health-issues/conditions/obesity/Pages/Pediatric-Help-For-Childhood-Obesity.aspx>)
- Family history (</English/family-life/health-management/Pages/Your-Family-Health-History-and-Genetics.aspx>) of early-onset heart disease

Following a Heart-Healthy Diet From an Early Age

American children and adolescents, on average, eat more saturated fat (</English/healthy-living/nutrition/Pages/What-About-Fat-And-Cholesterol.aspx>) and have higher blood cholesterol levels than young people their age in most other developed countries. The rate of heart disease tends to keep pace with cholesterol levels. One study found early signs of hardening of the arteries (atherosclerosis) in 7% of children between ages 10 and 15 years, and the rate was twice as high between ages 15 and 20.

According to the American Heart Association (<http://www.heart.org/HEARTORG/>), a heart-healthy diet from an early age lowers cholesterol and if followed through adolescence and beyond, should reduce the risk of coronary artery disease in adulthood.

All children older than 2 years should follow a heart-healthy diet, including low-fat (</English/ages-stages/gradeschool/nutrition/Pages/How-to-Reduce-Fat-and-Cholesterol-in-Your-Child's-Diet.aspx>) dairy products. For children between the ages of 12 months and 2 years with a family history of obesity, abnormal blood fats, or cardiovascular disease, reduced-fat milk should be considered.

Is There a Family History?

When you and your children first saw your pediatrician, you were probably asked if there was a history of heart or vascular disease in your family. If your children were young, their grandparents were probably relatively young as well and may not have had a heart attack (</English/health-issues/conditions/heart/Pages/Cardiac-Conditions-in-Teens.aspx>) or stroke (even though they may have been headed for one). If heart disease in the grandparents becomes apparent later on, be sure to bring it to your pediatrician's attention at the next checkup.

Cholesterol Testing for Adopted Children

Complete biological family medical histories are not usually available to adopted children (</English/family-life/family-dynamics/adoption-and-foster-care/Pages/Health-Needs-of-Adopted-Children-Audio.aspx>) and their parents, even for those adopted in open proceedings. To prevent the development of diseases linked to high blood cholesterol levels, adopted children should be screened periodically for blood lipid (fat) levels throughout childhood.

Additional Information

- [Healthy Active Living for Families \(/English/healthy-living/nutrition/Pages/Healthy-Active-Living-for-Families.aspx\)](/English/healthy-living/nutrition/Pages/Healthy-Active-Living-for-Families.aspx)
- [The 5 Food Groups: Sample Choices \(/English/healthy-living/nutrition/Pages/The-5-Food-Groups-Sample-Choices.aspx\)](/English/healthy-living/nutrition/Pages/The-5-Food-Groups-Sample-Choices.aspx)
- [Overcoming Obstacles to Physical Activity \(/English/healthy-living/fitness/Pages/Overcoming-Obstacles-to-Physical-Activity.aspx\)](/English/healthy-living/fitness/Pages/Overcoming-Obstacles-to-Physical-Activity.aspx)
- [What About Fat and Cholesterol? \(/English/healthy-living/nutrition/Pages/What-About-Fat-And-Cholesterol.aspx\)](/English/healthy-living/nutrition/Pages/What-About-Fat-And-Cholesterol.aspx)
- [Your Family Health History & Genetics \(/English/family-life/health-management/Pages/Your-Family-Health-History-and-Genetics.aspx\)](/English/family-life/health-management/Pages/Your-Family-Health-History-and-Genetics.aspx)

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HEALTHY LIVING

Childhood Nutrition

Nearly 1 in 3 children in America is overweight or obese. Despite all the focus on kids being overweight and obese, many parents are still confused, especially when it comes to what kids eat. *How much does your child need? Is he getting enough calcium? Enough iron? Too much fat?*



Whether you have a toddler or a teen, nutrition is important to his or her physical and mental development. Here's what children need — no matter what the age.

Babies

During this stage of life, it's almost all about the milk — whether it's breast milk (</English/ages-stages/baby/breastfeeding/Pages/Breastfeeding-Benefits-Your-Baby%27s-Immune-System.aspx>), formula (</English/ages-stages/baby/feeding-nutrition/Pages/Choosing-a-Formula.aspx>), or a combination of the two. Breast milk or formula will provide practically every nutrient a baby needs for the first year of life.

- At about six months most babies are ready to start solid foods (</English/ages-stages/baby/feeding-nutrition/Pages/Switching-To-Solid-Foods.aspx>) like iron-fortified infant cereal and strained fruits, vegetables, and pureed meats. Because breast milk may not provide enough iron and zinc when babies are around six to nine months, fortified cereals and meats can help breastfed babies in particular.
- Once you do start adding foods, don't go low-fat crazy (</English/ages-stages/baby/feeding-nutrition/Pages/Low-Fat-Diets-For-Babies.aspx>). Although the AAP guidelines state fat restriction in some babies is appropriate, in general, you don't want to restrict fats under age two because a healthy amount of fat is important for babies' brain and nerve development.

Toddlers & Preschoolers

Toddlers and preschoolers grow in spurts and their appetites come and go in spurts, so they may eat a whole lot one day and then hardly anything the next. It's normal, and as long as you offer them a healthy selection, they will get what they need.

- Calcium, the body's building block, is needed to develop strong, healthy bones and teeth. Children may not believe or care that milk "does a body good," but it is the best source of much-needed calcium. Still, there's hope for the milk-allergic (</English/healthy-living/nutrition/Pages/Milk-Allergy.aspx>), lactose-intolerant, or those who just don't like milk. Lactose-free milk, soy milk, tofu, sardines, and calcium-fortified orange juices, cereals, waffles, and oatmeal are some calcium-filled options. In some cases, pediatricians may recommend calcium supplements.
- Fiber (</English/healthy-living/nutrition/Pages/Kids-Need-Fiber-Heres-Why-and-How.aspx>) is another important focus. Toddlers start to say "no" more and preschoolers can be especially opinionated about what they eat. The kids may want to stick to the

bland, beige, starchy diet (think chicken nuggets, fries, macaroni), but this is really the time to encourage fruits, vegetables ([/English/healthy-living/nutrition/Pages/How-to-Get-Your-Child-to-Eat-More-Fruits-and-Veggies.aspx](#)), whole grains, and beans, which all provide fiber. Not only does fiber prevent heart disease ([/English/health-issues/conditions/heart/Pages/Heart-Disease.aspx](#)) and other conditions, but it also helps aid digestion and prevents constipation ([/English/health-issues/conditions/abdominal/Pages/Constipation.aspx](#)), something you and your child will be thankful for.

Gradeschoolers

It isn't uncommon for a 6- or 7-year-old to suddenly decide to be a vegetarian ([/English/ages-stages/gradeschool/nutrition/Pages/Vegetarian-Diet-for-Children.aspx](#)) once they understand animals and where food comes from. This doesn't mean your child won't get enough protein ([/English/ages-stages/teen/nutrition/Pages/Protein-for-the-Teen-Athlete.aspx](#)); animal tissue isn't the only place we get protein. Rice, beans, eggs, milk, and peanut butter all have protein. So whether your child goes "no-meat" for a week or for life, he or she will likely still get sufficient amounts of protein.

Areas that might be a little too sufficient are sugars, fats, and sodium.

- This is a time when kids first go to school and have a little bit more choices in what they eat, especially if they're getting it in the cafeteria themselves. Cakes, candy, chips, and other snacks might become lunchtime staples.
- The body needs carbs (sugars), fats, and sodium, but should be eaten in moderation, as too much can lead to unneeded weight gain and other health problems.
- Packing your child's lunch or going over the lunch menu and encouraging him or her to select healthier choices ([/English/ages-stages/gradeschool/nutrition/Pages/Making-Healthy-Food-Choices.aspx](#)) can help keep things on track.

Preteens & Teens

As puberty kicks in, young people need more calories to support the many changes they will experience. Unfortunately, for some, those extra calories come from fast food ([/English/ages-stages/teen/nutrition/Pages/Healthy-and-Unhealthy-Choices-at-Fast-Food-Restaurants.aspx](#)) or "junk" foods with little nutritional value.

- Some adolescents go the opposite way and restrict calories, fats, or carbs. Adolescence is the time kids start to become conscious of their weight and body image, which, for some, can lead to eating disorders ([/English/health-issues/conditions/emotional-problems/Pages/Is-Your-Teen-at-Risk-for-Developing-an-Eating-Disorder.aspx](#)) or other unhealthy behaviors. Parents should be aware of changes in their child's eating patterns and make family dinners a priority ([/English/family-life/family-dynamics/Pages/Mealtime-as-Family-Time.aspx](#)) at least once or twice a week.
- Like calories, calcium requirements are higher. Calcium is more important than ever during the tween and teen years because the majority of bone mass is built ([/English/ages-stages/gradeschool/puberty/Pages/Physical-Development-of-School-Age-Children.aspx](#)) during this time. Encouraging kids to have milk, milk products, or calcium-rich alternatives, should help them get more calcium.
- Your child's gender may play a role in whether he or she needs more of a particular nutrient. For instance, teen girls need more iron than their male counterparts to replace what's lost during menstruation ([/English/ages-stages/gradeschool/puberty/Pages/Physical-Development-Girls-What-to-Expect.aspx](#)), and males need slightly more protein than girls.

Although getting your child to eat healthy — regardless of his or her age — can be a constant battle, it's one well worth fighting. A healthy child becomes a healthy adult, and only with your support and guidance will your child be both.

Water: Drink Up!

Water makes up more than half of kids' body weight and is needed to keep all parts of the body functioning properly.

- There's no specific amount of water recommended for children, but it's a good idea to give them water throughout the day — not just when they're thirsty.
- Babies generally don't need water during the first year of life.
- If your child doesn't like the taste of water, add a bit of lemon or lime for flavor.
- Fruits and veggies are also good sources of water.
- Kids should drink more water when ill, when it's hot out ([/English/safety-prevention/at-home/Pages/Protecting-Children-from-Extreme-Heat-Information-for-Parents.aspx](#)), or when engaged in physical activity.

Recommended Amount of Calories

Here's what the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) recommends kids get calorie-wise and from each food group for a healthy, balanced diet:

Estimated Calorie Needs per Day by Age & Gender

Estimated amounts of calories¹ needed to maintain calorie balance for various gender and age. The estimates are rounded to the nearest 200 calories for assignment to a USDA Food Pattern. An individual's calorie needs may be higher or lower than these average estimates based on activity level.

	Female	Male
Age (years)	Calories (per day)	
2-3	1,000	1,000
4-8	1,200 - 1,400	1,200 - 1,400
9-13	1,400 - 1,600	1,600 - 2,000
14-18	1,800	2,000 - 2,400

¹ Based on Estimated Energy Requirements (EER) equations, using reference heights (average) and reference weights (healthy) for each age-gender group. For children and adolescents, reference height and weight vary.

Additional Information from HealthyChildren.org:

- [Kids Need Fiber: Here's Why and How \(/English/healthy-living/nutrition/Pages/Kids-Need-Fiber-Heres-Why-and-How.aspx\)](#)
- [How to Get Your Child to Eat More Fruits and Veggies \(/English/healthy-living/nutrition/Pages/How-to-Get-Your-Child-to-Eat-More-Fruits-and-Veggies.aspx\)](#)
- [Making Healthy Food Choices \(/English/ages-stages/gradeschool/nutrition/Pages/Making-Healthy-Food-Choices.aspx\)](#)
- [Healthy and Unhealthy Choices at Fast Food Restaurants \(/English/ages-stages/teen/nutrition/Pages/Healthy-and-Unhealthy-Choices-at-Fast-Food-Restaurants.aspx\)](#)

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HEALTHY LIVING

Common Food Allergies

Any food may cause an allergic reaction, but 90% of food allergies in children are caused by just 6 common foods or food groups—milk, eggs, peanuts, tree nuts, soy, and wheat. In adults, a similar percentage of serious allergies are caused by just 4 foods—peanuts, tree nuts, fish, and shellfish. Allergies to fruits and vegetables are much less common and usually less severe.



Cow's Milk

Allergy to cow's milk is among the most common hypersensitivity in young children, probably because it is the first foreign protein that many infants ingest in such a large quantity, especially if they are bottle-fed. If there is a cow's-milk allergy, occasionally even a breastfed (/English/ages-stages/baby/breastfeeding/Pages/default.aspx) infant may have colic (/English/ages-stages/baby/crying-colic/Pages/default.aspx) or eczema (/English/health-issues/conditions/allergies-asthma/Pages/Managing-Eczema.aspx) until milk and dairy foods are eliminated from the mother's diet. Between 2 and 3 out of every 100 children younger than 3 years have allergy symptoms linked to cow's milk.

Vomiting (/English/health-issues/conditions/abdominal/pages/Treating-Vomiting.aspx) after feeding is the most common way a child shows a milk allergy, but more severe reactions can occur. Colic, crying, and gassiness can sometimes be the only manifestation of cow's-milk allergy in very young infants. (It must be said, though, that in the great majority of infants, no cause for colic is ever found, and the inconsolable crying eventually stops without treatment, never to return, before the baby is 6 months old). Other early and more subtle symptoms of milk allergy often involve the itchy, dry rash of eczema (atopic dermatitis). Of course the most obvious kind of reaction to milk is when the child drinks milk or eats a milk product and immediately develops breathing problems or hives (/English/health-issues/conditions/skin/pages/Hives.aspx). Most children with cow's-milk allergy are also allergic to milk from goats or sheep, so these are not good substitutes.

Soy-based formula may or may not be suitable for milk-allergic infants because some who are sensitive to cow's milk are also unable to tolerate soy protein. If your cow's-milk-allergic baby does not tolerate soy formula, your pediatrician may recommend a special formula made of extensively hydrolyzed protein or an amino acid elemental formula.

Many children outgrow milk allergy as their immune systems mature. However, your pediatrician will probably suggest that allergy tests be performed before your child tries milk again. If testing shows the allergy has gone away, milk can be cautiously given to your child in gradually increasing amounts in the doctor's office, where any reaction can be monitored and if necessary, treated. If your child simply has lactose intolerance, allergy testing is usually unnecessary, and milk and milk products can be gradually reintroduced at home while you watch for symptoms. In supermarkets, there are products with varying reduced content of the sugar lactose that help children with lactose intolerance (/English/healthy-living/nutrition/Pages/Lactose-Intolerance-in-Children.aspx) to be able to have milk in their diet.

Milk and foods derived from milk are important sources of calcium (/English/ages-stages/teen/nutrition/Pages/Importance-of-Calcium.aspx), a mineral essential for strong bones and teeth, muscle and nerve function, and the health of every system in

the body. Dark-green leafy vegetables, canned fish eaten with the bones (eg, sardines, salmon), calcium-fortified orange juice, dried figs and prunes, tofu, and dried beans are among the many rich nondairy sources of calcium for older children who cannot tolerate milk, cheese, and yogurt.

Eggs

Children who are allergic to eggs are reacting primarily to the protein in the egg white. However, because egg yolk can often be contaminated with egg white, it's safer for egg-allergic children to avoid egg altogether. Luckily, while eggs are nutritionally valuable and an excellent source of protein, they are not essential for good nutrition. Meat, fish, dairy products, grains, and legumes are excellent alternative sources of similar protein, minerals, and vitamins. If your child is allergic to eggs, watch out for hidden egg ingredients such as an egg-based glaze on top of certain breads or egg used to hold breading on fried food.

Egg substitutes developed for low-cholesterol diets cannot be used. They are cholesterol-free (because they do not contain yolk, the part of the egg where the cholesterol is found) but still contain egg protein because they are made with egg white, the part responsible for causing allergies. Some vaccines may contain egg proteins and should be avoided or taken with caution by those with severe egg allergy. The measles-mumps-rubella vaccine is considered safe for those with egg allergy, but talk to your doctor about seasonal influenza vaccines and others that may have egg proteins.

Peanuts and Tree Nuts

When is a nut not a nut? When it's a legume—like peanuts, which are cousins to peas and beans. Because peanuts and tree nuts come from different plant families, a child who is sensitive to peanuts can often eat walnuts, pecans, and other tree nuts without a problem. However, caution is needed because peanut-allergic children, for unknown reasons, are more likely also to have a separate tree-nut allergy.

Like eggs, peanuts are delicious and nutritious but not essential for a healthy diet. No nutritional substitutes are needed. Most people with a peanut allergy tolerate other legumes such as soy and beans, even when sometimes skin or blood tests will come up positive for these other legumes.

Peanuts, although generally pretty easy to avoid, can sometimes show up in foods when least expected. Peanuts are often ground up and used as bulking agents in food products such as candies. Peanut butter is sometimes used by restaurants and caterers as a "glue" in food preparation to hold the food item together. Therefore, it is imperative that you not only read labels carefully to make sure peanuts are not unsuspected ingredients in commercial foods, but that you also question and clarify the content of food being bought and eaten at restaurants, or prepared and consumed at locations other than your own house.

Allergy to tree nuts—walnuts, pecans, cashews, Brazil nuts, almonds, hazel nuts; all the nuts in hard shells—can be as severe as peanut allergy, and the same warnings apply. One child may have an allergy to only one tree nut, while another may have an allergy to a number of tree nuts. Confusion can sometimes occur about the different types of tree nuts, so tree-nut-allergic individuals often just stay away from all of them, to play it safe. Make care-givers, teachers, friends, and family members aware that your child must strictly avoid all products with even a trace of nuts and peanuts because nut allergy, in general, is the most severe of all the food allergies.

Soy

Babies fed soy formula, like that of cow's milk, can develop a rash, runny nose, wheezing, diarrhea ([English/health-issues/conditions/abdominal/pages/Diarrhea.aspx](#)), or vomiting from allergy to the soy protein. When changing to a soy formula, some infants who are allergic to cow's milk are found to also be allergic to soy. If this is the case, your pediatrician may recommend a low-allergenic formula made with extensively hydrolyzed protein or amino acid elemental formula. Children with soy allergy generally tolerate soy oil because it contains minimal protein. Soy lecithin is a fatty derivative of soy that is extremely low in soy protein and usually tolerated by those with a soy allergy.

Wheat and Gluten

Rice and oats are usually the first cereals introduced into the diet because they are less likely than other grains to cause allergy problems. If there are no problems with oats, wheat is given next. Wheat is the grain most often associated with allergies, but even so, it is still an uncommon food allergy. This is fortunate because wheat is found in so many prepared foods.

There are 2 types of negative immune reactions to wheat. The first is classic food allergy, with symptoms such as hives or wheezing that occur immediately after the child eats a food made with wheat. The second is called celiac disease (</English/health-issues/conditions/abdominal/Pages/Celiac-Disease.aspx>). Gluten is a protein found in grains such as wheat, rye, and barley. In a sensitive child, gluten damages the lining of the small intestine and interferes with nutrient absorption. This damage can go undetected for some time. Typical symptoms of celiac disease are abdominal pain, diarrhea, irritability, poor weight gain, and slow growth. Celiac disease may reveal itself shortly after the infant has his first bowl of cereal, but in some cases, symptoms are so minor that the condition can smolder at a low level for years and a diagnosis may not be made until adolescence or even adulthood.

Food Allergy Notes

- If your child has symptoms indicating allergy after being given a particular food, keep it out of the diet and discuss the symptoms with your pediatrician.
- Some children with milk or egg allergy may tolerate a small amount of milk or egg if it is cooked into a baked good such as bread or a muffin. However, other children react to even this small, extensively heated amount.
- A child avoiding multiple foods because of food allergy could be at risk of malnutrition. Discuss seeing a registered dietitian with your doctor, to be able to get some expert help about how to wisely feed your child who has significant dietary restrictions.
- Your child with a food allergy should be able to do every activity another child can do except eat the food to which she is allergic. Talk with your pediatrician or allergist (</English/family-life/health-management/pediatric-specialists/Pages/What-is-a-Pediatric-Allergist-Immunologist.aspx>) about allergen avoidance, as well as dietary and treatment strategies to maintain a safe and healthy lifestyle.

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HEALTHY LIVING

Portions and Serving Sizes

What do parents need to know about serving size and portion size?

The serving size on a Nutrition Facts label (</English/healthy-living/nutrition/Pages/Front-of-Package-Nutrition-Labels.aspx>) is a specific measured amount. Calories and nutrient information is based on the serving size and a 2,000 calorie diet.



A portion is the amount of food you choose to serve your children at each snack (</English/healthy-living/nutrition/Pages/Choosing-Healthy-Snacks.aspx>) or meal. Parents need to be aware that a serving size on a Nutrition Facts label may not be the right portion for their child. For example, 15 crackers may be the serving size listed on a label; however, the number of crackers you serve your child will vary based on different calorie needs.

Parents also need to be aware that servings at restaurants (</English/ages-stages/teen/nutrition/Pages/Healthy-and-Unhealthy-Choices-at-Fast-Food-Restaurants.aspx>) can vary. For example, kid-sized hamburgers and kid-sized drinks can vary in ounces, and small fries at one restaurant could be the same size as medium fries at another restaurant. Parents should feel free to ask about servings sizes and if nutritional information is available.

What are suggested portion sizes for children aged 1 to 10?

The following are suggested portion sizes by age. However, your child's stage of growth and development, age, appetite, and activity will all play a part in deciding on what portion sizes are right for your child. In general, portions should be "child-sized" until adolescence.

Food Group	Servings per Day	Portion Size for Ages 1 to 3	Portion Size for Ages 4 to 6	Portion Size for Ages 7 to 10
Fruits	2-3 servings	¼ cup cooked, frozen, or canned ½ piece fresh ¼ cup 100% juice	¼ cup cooked, frozen, or canned ½ piece fresh ¼ cup 100% juice	½ cup cooked, frozen, or canned 1 piece fresh ½ cup 100% juice
Vegetables	2-3 servings	¼ cup cooked	¼ cup cooked ½ cup salad	½ cup cooked 1 cup salad
Grains	6-11 servings	½ slice bread ¼ cup cooked cereal, rice, or pasta ¼ cup dry cereal 2-3 crackers	½ slice bread ¼ cup cooked cereal, rice, or pasta ¼ cup dry cereal 3-4 crackers	1 slice bread ½ cup cooked cereal, rice, or pasta ¾-1 cup dry cereal 4-5 crackers
Meats and other proteins	2 servings	1 ounce meat, fish, chicken, or tofu ¼ cup cooked beans ½ egg	1 ounce meat, fish, chicken, or tofu ¼ cup cooked beans 1 egg	2-3 ounces meat, fish, chicken, or tofu ½ cup cooked beans 1 or 2 eggs
Dairy	2-3 servings	½ cup milk ½ ounce cheese ¼ cup yogurt	½ cup milk 1 ounce cheese ¼ cup yogurt	1 cup milk 1 ounce cheese ¾-1 cup yogurt

Adapted from Dietz WH, Stern L, eds. *Nutrition: What Every Parent Needs to Know*. 2nd ed. Elk Grove Village, IL: American Academy of Pediatrics; 2012: 1-4.

Additional Information:

- [The 5 Food Groups: Sample Choices \(/English/healthy-living/nutrition/Pages/The-5-Food-Groups-Sample-Choices.aspx\)](/English/healthy-living/nutrition/Pages/The-5-Food-Groups-Sample-Choices.aspx)
- [Front of Package Nutrition Labels \(/English/healthy-living/nutrition/Pages/Front-of-Package-Nutrition-Labels.aspx\)](/English/healthy-living/nutrition/Pages/Front-of-Package-Nutrition-Labels.aspx)
- [Healthy and Unhealthy Choices at Fast Food Restaurants \(/English/ages-stages/teen/nutrition/Pages/Healthy-and-Unhealthy-Choices-at-Fast-Food-Restaurants.aspx\)](/English/ages-stages/teen/nutrition/Pages/Healthy-and-Unhealthy-Choices-at-Fast-Food-Restaurants.aspx)
- [The Healthy Children Show: Energy Balance for School-Age Kids \(Video\) \(/English/ages-stages/gradeschool/nutrition/Pages/The-Healthy-Children-Show-Energy-Balance-for-School-Age-Kids-Video.aspx\)](/English/ages-stages/gradeschool/nutrition/Pages/The-Healthy-Children-Show-Energy-Balance-for-School-Age-Kids-Video.aspx)

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