

Developing Healthy Eating Habits with MyPyramid for Preschoolers

MyPyramid for Preschoolers is U.S. Department of Agriculture's (USDA) food guide for young children. It offers many tips and suggestions for parents and caregivers to ensure that preschoolers stay active and healthy. *MyPyramid for Preschoolers* is available at www.mypyramid.gov/preschoolers.

Many factors influence a child's eating habits. *MyPyramid for Preschoolers* stresses that the adults in children's lives, especially parents, have the biggest impact. To raise a healthy eater, adults must be healthy role models and set a good example with positive eating habits, such as

- Offer a variety of foods.
- Start with small portions.
- Help them know when they've had enough.
- Follow a meal and snack schedule.
- Cope with a picky eater.
- Help them try new foods.
- Make food fun.



Offer a Variety of Foods

As a caregiver, you are responsible for helping children learn about food. If you provide a variety of healthy foods, children are more likely to get the nutrients they need from all food groups, be more willing to try new foods, and develop a taste for a wide variety of foods. Do this by mixing things up. Add new choices to the child care menu. An easy way to add more fruit is to use it to top their morning cereal.



Start with Small Portions

Use smaller bowls and plates for children. Do not insist that children finish everything on their plate. They will stop eating when they are full. Allow children to serve themselves. This will teach them proper serving sizes, help them learn new skills, and help them feel independent.

Help Children Know When They Have Had Enough

Children who listen to their fullness cues stop eating when they are full and are less likely to over eat. Help children keep listening to their bodies as they grow. Avoid praising a clean plate. Children should stop when they are full. Do not use food as a reward. However, try not to restrict specific foods. Instead, let cookies, cupcakes, and other sweets be sometimes foods.

Follow a Meal and Snack Schedule

Regularly scheduled meal and snack time help your preschooler learn structure for eating. Plan for three meals and one to two snacks a day. Do not offer the children in your care extras such as candy or cookies to make up for the meal not eaten. Set reasonable times for the start and finish of a meal. When you see that a child is no longer interested in the meal, excuse him or her from the table. While these schedules are helpful, it is also important to listen to the child. Offering a healthy snack helps keep children from becoming too hungry.

Try New Foods

It is normal for young children to reject foods that they have never tried. Offer new foods many times. It may take up to a dozen tries for a child to accept a new food. Start by giving them a small taste at first and be patient. Be a good role model by trying new foods yourself. Describe its taste, texture, and smell. The children will follow your example.

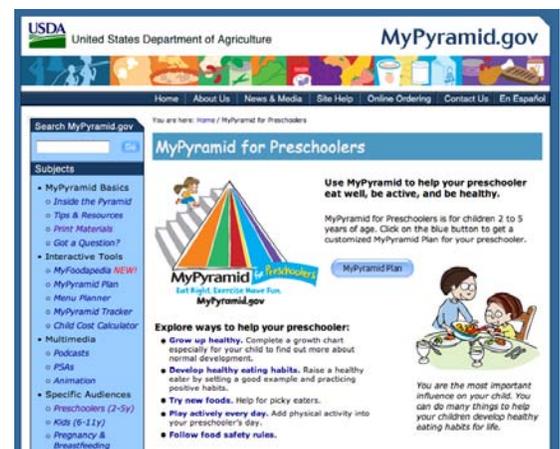
Make Food Fun for Picky Eaters

Picky eating is normal and usually temporary for young children. Deal with it in a positive way. Name a food your child helps create. It will make them feel important if you make a big deal of serving “Dawn’s Salad” or “Peter’s Sweet Potatoes” for dinner. Who says food has to be boring?

Make food fun by cutting it into shapes with cookie cutters. Have the children make towers out of whole-grain crackers, spell words with pretzel sticks, or make funny faces on a plate using different types of fruit.

Jazz up the taste of vegetables with lowfat dressings or dips. Try hummus or bean spread as a dip for vegetables.

Fun recipes and kitchen activities are found on the MyPyramid for Preschoolers Web site.



Recipe to Try

Great sauce to use on broccoli or cauliflower.

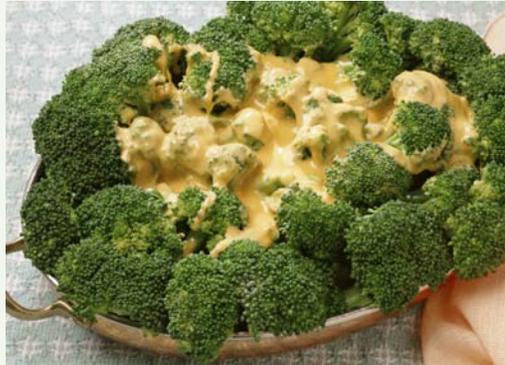
Cheese Sauce C-07A¹

| | |
|--|--------|
| Margarine/butter | ¼ cup |
| Enriched all-purpose flour | ½ cup |
| Salt | ½ tsp |
| Instant nonfat dry milk, reconstituted | 1 qt |
| Reduced fat processed American cheese, shredded | 3 cups |

Melt margarine or butter in a sauce pan. Add flour and salt. Stir until smooth. Gradually add milk, stirring constantly. Cook, stirring frequently, until smooth and begins to thicken, 12–15 minutes. Add in cheese and continue to stir until smooth and thick. Portion with 1 oz ladle (2 Tbsp).

Number of servings: 16

Serving size: 2 Tbsp (1 oz ladle) provides ¾ oz cheese.



¹USDA Recipes for Child Care. Available online at www.nfsmi.org.

Mealtime Memo FOR CHILD CARE

Breakfast Menus

| Monday | Tuesday | Wednesday | Thursday | Friday |
|---|--|---|---|--|
| Diced peaches Cooked oatmeal Milk | Grape juice Blueberry Muffin A-03 ¹ Milk | Pineapple chunks Pancake A-12 ¹ Milk | Applesauce Cut Biscuit using Master Mix A-09B ¹ Milk | Fresh strawberries Unsweetened whole-grain cereal variety Milk |

Lunch Menus

| Monday | Tuesday | Wednesday | Thursday | Friday |
|---|--|--|---|--|
| Baked potato topped with Cheese Sauce C-07A ¹ , diced ham, and steamed broccoli Whole wheat roll Milk | Grilled Sandwich F-03 ¹ Butternut squash with cinnamon Waldorf Fruit Salad E-14 ¹ Milk | Beef-Vegetable Stew D-16 ¹ Fresh pear slices Corn Muffin A-02 ¹ Milk | Black bean and corn quesadilla with cheddar cheese Lowfat yogurt, plain Orange sections Milk | Chicken Nuggets D-09B ¹ Diced apricots Green beans Whole wheat roll Milk |

Snack Menus

| Monday | Tuesday | Wednesday | Thursday | Friday |
|--|--|---|--|---|
| Hard cooked egg Graham crackers Water ² | Cheddar cheese Wheat crackers Water ² | Yogurt Fruit Dip G-04 ¹ Apple slices Water ² | Pineapple Scone A-01 ¹ Milk Water ² | Peanut butter ³ Whole-grain crackers Water ² |

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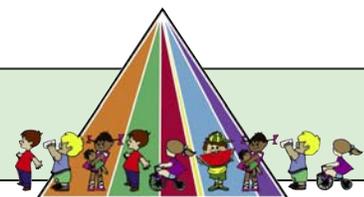
²Water is suggested as a beverage for all snacks even when other beverages are offered to encourage children to drink water.

³Sunflower butter may be substituted for peanut butter.

Sources

USDA, (March 12, 2009). *MyPyramid for Preschoolers*. Retrieved May 26, 2009, Web site: www.mypyramid.gov/preschoolers

Subscribe to *Mealtime Memo for Child Care* online at www.nfsmi.org and receive the link to download the newsletter via e-mail each month!!



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