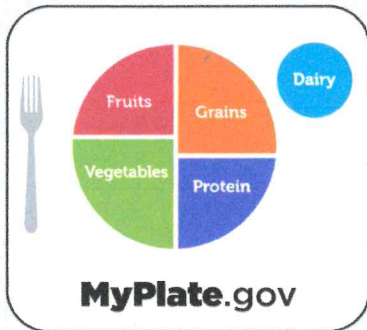


# Encouraging Excellent Eating Early

Interested in giving your small child a taste for healthy eating right from the start? Kids can react strongly to the foods they are offered – healthy or not! They may push them away, refuse to open their mouth, shake their head, or more. What is a parent or caregiver to do?

Nobody's perfect, but with a few child-feeding tips and advice on how to set a positive tone for balanced, healthy eating, anyone can be a child-feeding pro!



## MYPLATE CAN HELP!

Make every bite count with MyPlate by offering a variety of nutritious options from each food group – fruits, vegetables, grains, dairy, and protein foods – including those that provide unsaturated fats and are low in added sugar and sodium. From apples to avocados, corn tortillas to queso fresco, and pork to parsley, you can offer your child a variety of colors, textures, and flavors.

Once you know what to feed, it's time to master how to do it. Read on for our best tips to help small kids build healthy plates.

## SETTING THE TABLE FOR SUCCESS

Mealtime is family time. Even ten minutes of eating together can increase children's fruit and vegetable intake. Start this habit with your baby or toddler by bringing them to the table with you!

Your child may only be eating baby food but include them at meals to increase their exposure to table food by seeing the foods you eat.

It can take up to 15 exposures before a food is "trusted" and tasted. Use the exposure time to describe the food.\*

Tasting is just the first step – it can take 10 to 15 more exposures before they like the food. This means it could take 30 exposures in total before your child enjoys the food.\*



If your child eats the same foods as you, ensure their food has no added sugar or sodium. If adding these to your food, set aside their portion first.

Each exposure can look different. Meats, like pork, can be ground or shredded while vegetables, like avocado, can be cubed or mashed.

## MEALTIME IN ACTION

This pork looks juicy, feels soft, and is warm!



The tortilla is crispy, what colors do you see on it?

The vegetables are different colors, which ones do you see?

This avocado is green, sounds squishy, and feels smooth.

## GOING BEYOND 'YUCK' and 'YUM'

### What does it look like?

Colorful	Goopy
Dry	Bumpy
Juicy	Shiny
Runny	

### What does it feel like?

Chewy	Wet
Creamy	Mushy
Crunchy	Smooth
Dry	Sticky

### What does it taste like?

Neutral	Sweet
Spicy	Tart
Sour	

### What does it smell like?

Strong	Spicy
Fresh	Fishy
Minty	

### What temperature is it?

Cool	Hot
Cold	Warm
Freezing	

### What does it sound like?

Crunchy  
Crispy  
Sizzling  
Squishy

## POWERFUL WORDS TO USE DURING MEALTIME

"Good job trying a new food!"

"Wow! Did you notice everybody likes different foods on their plate?"

"What vegetable would you like to eat tomorrow?"

## REFUSING FOOD? TRY THESE NEUTRAL PHRASES

"We can try this fruit together again another time."

"Next time, would you like to try your potatoes soft and smooth like mashed potatoes instead of roasted in pieces?"

"When you are ready, you can give it a try."

## TIPS TO REMEMBER WHILE YOU PRACTICE YOUR NEW POWER LANGUAGE

- As a parent or caregiver, you decide what, when, and where the child eats; the child decides if and how much they will eat.
- Introduce new foods with current favorites – this may help acceptance.
- Small children don't eat a lot of food at a time, so they do not need to eat a certain amount at each sitting.
- Add 1-2 tablespoons of each food at the table on your child's plate. Follow their lead, if your child eats a food, offer more - one tablespoon at a time.
- Because they eat small amounts at a time, make every bite count with healthy choices.

**pork**  
checkoff

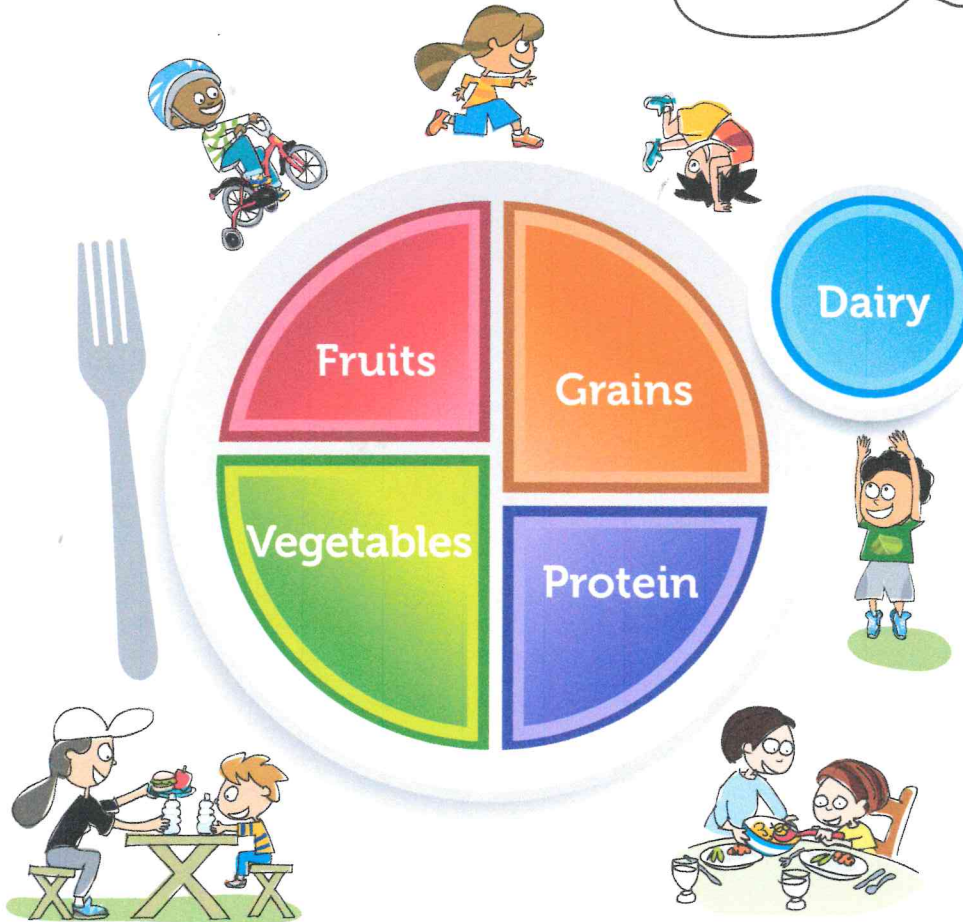
fresh avocados  
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# Healthy Eating <sup>for</sup> preschoolers



Choose **MyPlate.gov**

## Get your child on the path to healthy eating.



### *Offer a variety of healthy foods.*

Choose foods from each MyPlate food group. Pay attention to dairy foods, whole grains, and vegetables to build healthy habits that will last a lifetime.

### *Be mindful of sweet drinks and other foods.*

Offer water instead of sugary drinks like regular soda and fruit drinks. Other foods like hot dogs, burgers, pizza, cookies, cakes, and candy are only occasional treats.

### *Focus on the meal and each other.*

Your child learns by watching you. Let your child choose how much to eat of foods you provide. Children copy your likes, dislikes, and your interest in trying new foods.

### *Be patient with your child.*

Children enjoy food when eating it is their own choice. Some new foods take time. Give a taste at first and wait a bit. Let children serve themselves by taking small amounts. Offer new foods many times.

### *Cook together.*

### *Eat together.*

### *Talk together.*

### *Make meal time family time.*



# Healthy Eating

for preschoolers

# Daily Food Checklist



Use this Checklist as a general guide.

- This food checklist is based on average needs. Do not be concerned if your child does not eat the exact amounts suggested. Your child may need more or less than average. For example, food needs increase during growth spurts.
- Children's appetites vary from day to day. Some days they may eat less than these amounts; other days they may want more. Let your child choose how much to eat. Throughout a day, offer amounts shown below.

Food group	2 year olds	3 year olds	4 and 5 year olds	What counts as:
<b>Fruits</b> Focus on whole fruits 	1 cup	1 – 1½ cups	1 – 1½ cups	½ cup of fruit? ½ cup mashed, sliced, or chopped fruit ½ cup 100% fruit juice ½ small banana 4-5 large strawberries 
<b>Vegetables</b> Vary your veggies 	1 cup	1 – 1½ cups	1½ – 2 cups	½ cup of veggies? ½ cup mashed, sliced, or chopped vegetables 1 cup raw leafy greens ½ cup vegetable juice 1 small ear of corn 
<b>Grains</b> Make half your grains whole grains 	3 ounces	3 – 5 ounces	4 – 5 ounces	1 ounce of grains? 1 slice bread 1 cup ready-to-eat cereal flakes ½ cup cooked oatmeal, rice, or pasta 1 tortilla (6" across) 
<b>Protein Foods</b> Vary your protein routine 	2 ounces	2 – 4 ounces	3 – 5 ounces	1 ounce of protein foods? 1 ounce cooked meat, poultry, or seafood 1 egg 1 Tablespoon peanut butter ¼ cup cooked beans or peas (kidney, pinto, lentils) 
<b>Dairy</b> Choose low-fat or fat-free milk or yogurt 	2 cups	2 – 2½ cups	2½ cups	½ cup of dairy? ½ cup milk 4 ounces yogurt ¾ ounce cheese 

Some foods are easy to choke on while eating. Children need to sit when eating. Foods like hot dogs, grapes, and raw carrots need to be cut into small pieces the size of a nickel. Be alert if serving 3- to 5-year-olds foods like popcorn, nuts, seeds, or other hard foods.

There are many ways to divide the Daily Food Checklist into meals and snacks. View the "Meal and Snack Patterns and Ideas" to see how these amounts might look on your preschooler's plate at [www.ChooseMyPlate.gov/preschoolers-meal-and-snack-patterns](http://www.ChooseMyPlate.gov/preschoolers-meal-and-snack-patterns).

