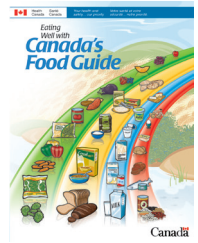


# How to Build a Healthy Preschooler (3-5 years)

- A** A healthy preschooler starts with healthy eating, physical activity and positive self-esteem.
- B** Balanced meals include a variety of foods from at least three of the four food groups.
- C** Canada's Food Guide includes foods from the four food groups: Vegetables and Fruit; Grain Products; Milk and Alternatives; Meat and Alternatives.
- D** Don't pressure or bribe your child to eat. The more a parent pushes foods, the less likely a child is to eat them.
- E** Eat with your preschooler as often as possible. Set a good example by eating a variety of foods.
- F** Food jags are periods when children will only eat certain foods. Be patient and try not to worry, especially if your child is active, growing and healthy.
- G** Growth is affected by many things. Each child is different and can grow at different rates. It is important to watch your child's own growth pattern.
- H** Healthy bodies come in different shapes and sizes. Celebrate your child's unique qualities. Teach them to love and value themselves.
- I** Iron is important for growth. Offer a variety of iron-rich foods at each meal such as meats, fish, eggs, tofu, legumes and iron-fortified cereals.
- J** Juice should be avoided or limited to no more than 125-175 mL ( $\frac{1}{2}$  -  $\frac{3}{4}$  cup) a day. Offer water to quench thirst.
- K** Keep a variety of healthy, ready-to-eat snacks available such as fresh fruit, cut-up vegetables, yogurt, cereal and milk.
- L** Limit screen time to less than one hour a day for children 3 to 4 years and less than two hours a day for children 5 years. Less is better!
- M** Milk is nutritious. Offer preschoolers 500 mL (2 cups) each day. More than 750 mL (3 cups) each day can be filling and leave little room for other foods.
- N** New foods offered many times without pressure will encourage children to try them. It may take 10 - 15 times before they actually eat them!
- O** Offer at least one food your child likes as well as other familiar and new foods at meals.
- P** Playing actively indoors and outdoors should be a fun and regular part of every day. Try walking skipping, running or climbing.
- Q** Quality time with children includes playing active games and eating meals together as family, without TV or other distractions.
- R** Respect your child's appetite. Let your child decide how much food to eat from the healthy choices you offer. Let him feed himself.
- S** Schedule meals and snacks  $2\frac{1}{2}$  - 3 hours apart so that children come to the table hungry and interested in eating. They are more likely to try new foods when they are hungry.
- T** Tooth brushing is important. Help brush your child's teeth two times a day for two minutes with a soft bristle tooth brush.
- U** Use meal and snack times as a chance to teach your children about different foods, preparing foods and good table manners.
- V** Vitamin supplements are usually not needed, even for picky eaters. Eating well comes from food, not pills.
- W** Weight and height measurements should be taken regularly and plotted on a growth chart by your health care provider.
- X** Expect your preschooler's appetite to vary from day to day.
- Y** Young children are small eaters. They need to eat nutritious, higher fat foods like peanut butter, cheese and avocado to meet their energy needs.
- Z** Zest for life is a preschooler! They will explore and play, but they also need rest. Preschoolers need 10 - 15 hours of sleep each day.

# What Should My Preschooler Have Each Day?

Canada's Food Guide gives recommendations on the number of servings for each food group each day for preschoolers. Food Guide Servings can be divided into smaller meals and snacks that are offered every 2 ½ to 3 hours. Offer your child small portions (about ½ to one Food Guide serving) at meals and snacks and let your preschooler decide how much to eat.



Use the chart below to help plan meals and snacks.

Food Group	Age 3	Ages 4&5	What Is One Food Guide Serving?
<p><b>Vegetables and Fruit</b> Offer one dark green and one orange vegetable each day.</p>	4 Food Guide servings	5 Food Guide servings	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 1 piece of fruit</li> <li>• 125 mL (½ cup) of fresh, frozen or canned vegetables, tomato sauce</li> <li>• 250 mL (1 cup) of leafy raw vegetables or salad</li> </ul>
<p><b>Grain Products</b> Offer whole grain products each day.</p>	3 Food Guide servings	4 Food Guide servings	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 1 slice of whole grain bread</li> <li>• ½ bagel or small whole grain muffin</li> <li>• ½ pita or large tortilla</li> <li>• 125 mL (½ cup) of cooked rice, bulgur, quinoa, pasta or couscous</li> <li>• 175 mL (¾ cup) of hot cereal</li> <li>• 30 g of cold cereal</li> </ul>
<p><b>Milk and Alternatives</b> Offer skim, 1% or 2% milk each day.</p>	2 Food Guide servings	2 Food Guide servings	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 250 mL (1 cup) of cow's milk or fortified soy beverage</li> <li>• 175 g (¾ cup) of yogurt</li> <li>• 50 g (1 ½ oz) of hard cheese</li> </ul> <p><i>Plant-based beverages other than fortified soy beverage (e.g. rice, almond, coconut) are low in nutrients required for a child's growth and are not part the Milk and Alternatives food group.</i></p>
<p><b>Meat and Alternatives</b> Offer alternatives such as beans, lentils and tofu often.</p>	1 Food Guide serving	1 Food Guide servings	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 2 eggs</li> <li>• 30 mL (2 Tbsp) of peanut butter or other nut butters</li> <li>• 60 mL (¼ cup) of shelled nuts or seeds</li> <li>• 125 mL (½ cup) of cooked fish, shellfish, poultry, lean meat or game meat</li> <li>• 175 mL (¾ cup) of hummus, tofu or cooked legumes such as kidney beans, chickpeas and lentils</li> </ul>

## GOOD TO KNOW!

Fish is an excellent source of protein and healthy fats. Serve fish at least twice a week. Some types of fish are high in mercury, which is harmful to a child's developing brain. Serve fish that are lower in mercury and have omega-3 fats such as char, herring, mackerel, rainbow trout and salmon. To find out more about choosing fish, visit Unlock Food: <http://www.unlockfood.ca/en/Articles/Food-safety/Fish-and-Mercury.aspx#.Ui3dL9JwqSo>

## Tips for Feeding Preschoolers

A healthy snack should include at least two of the four food groups. This helps your preschooler to meet her nutrient needs.

### Examples include:

- Whole grain crackers and cheese
- Hummus with cucumbers and peppers
- Apple slices and cheese
- Yogurt and banana slices
- Whole grain toast with thinly spread peanut butter or avocado
- Whole grain cereal with milk

### Choking

Cut your child's food into bite size pieces to avoid choking. Avoid hard, small and round foods, and smooth and sticky foods.

- Cut grapes and cherry tomatoes into quarters
- Cut hard raw vegetables into narrow strips.
- Thinly spread peanut or nut butters on toast.
- Avoid hotdogs, candies, popcorn and nuts.

Always supervise young children when they are eating.

## A Sample Meal Plan

This menu is only a guide. Offer your child healthy foods from your family meal. Eat together as a family as often as you can. Let your child decide how much they want to eat from the foods offered.

### Breakfast

- Whole grain toast
- Cooked egg
- Banana
- Milk

### Morning Snack

- Whole grain crackers
- Orange slices
- Water

### Lunch

- Tuna salad on whole grain bread
- Cucumber slices and carrot strips
- Milk
- Fruit salad

### Afternoon Snack

- Yogurt
- Pear slices
- Water

### Supper

- Baked chicken
- Brown rice
- Cooked peas
- Milk
- Apple slices

### After Supper Snack

- Cereal
- Milk



### GOOD TO KNOW!

Offer water to drink at and between meals and snacks, especially when preschoolers are active, and when the weather is hot. Offer water and other drinks in an open cup.

Breastfeeding is encouraged. Continue to breastfeed for as long as both you and your child want.

### GOOD TO KNOW!

**What about physical activity? Eating well is important, but so is being active.**

Children age 3 and 4 years should get at least 180 minutes of physical activity every day. Try playing outside, walking, running or dancing.

Children age 5 years should get at least 60 minutes of moderate to vigorous intensity physical activity every day. Try going to the playground, biking, skating or swimming.

## Want More Information?

### Telehealth Ontario

Call and speak to a Registered Dietitian about nutrition and healthy eating at 1-866-797-0000.

### Dietitians of Canada

For nutrition information created by Registered Dietitians visit: [UnlockFood.ca](http://UnlockFood.ca)

To find a Registered Dietitian in your community visit: [www.dietitians.ca/Find-A-Dietitian](http://www.dietitians.ca/Find-A-Dietitian)

### Books

- *Child of Mine: Feeding with Love and Good Sense*. Ellyn Satter, 2000.
- *Secrets of Feeding a Healthy Family: How to Eat, How to Raise Good Eaters, How to Cook*. Ellyn Satter, 2008
- *Your Child's Weight ... Helping Without Harming*. Ellyn Satter, 2005.
- *Better Food for Kids: Your Essential Guide to Nutrition for all Children from Age 2 to 10*. Second Edition. J. Saab and D. Kalnins, 2010.

### Websites

- Canada's Food Guide: [www.canadasfoodguide.net](http://www.canadasfoodguide.net)
- Unlock Food: [www.UnlockFood.ca](http://www.UnlockFood.ca)
- Dietitians of Canada: [www.dietitians.ca](http://www.dietitians.ca)
- Healthy Canadians: [www.healthycanadians.gc.ca](http://www.healthycanadians.gc.ca)
- Ellyn Satter Institute: [www.ellynsatterinstitute.org](http://www.ellynsatterinstitute.org)
- Anaphylaxis Canada: [www.anaphylaxis.ca](http://www.anaphylaxis.ca)
- Canadian Physical Activity and Sedentary Behaviour Guidelines: 0-4 and 5-11 years. [www.csep.ca/guidelines](http://www.csep.ca/guidelines)
- Caring for Kids - Canadian Pediatric Society: [www.caringforkids.cps.ca](http://www.caringforkids.cps.ca)
- Best Start Resource Centre: [www.beststart.org](http://www.beststart.org)
- Videos - Raising Our Healthy Kids: <https://vimeo.com/raisingourhealthykids/channels>

### Contacts

Contact your local public health unit or community health centre for:

- More information about feeding your preschooler and;
- Parent education workshops and other nutrition related supports in your community



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