

2-5 YEARS OLD

Feeding Your Toddler or Preschooler

Around the age of two, children begin to develop a strong sense of self, which can sometimes lead to picky eating behaviors. Supporting your child in enjoying frequent meals and snacks that include choices from all major foods groups will make the most impact in helping their brains, bones and bodies grow!

Dairy

2 - 2 1/2 Cups

Fruits

1 - 2 Cups

Grains

3 - 6 Ounces

Veggies

1 - 2 1/2 Cups

Protein

2 - 5 1/2 Ounces

Think, Drink, Grow

Limit Added Sugars

Avoid sugar-sweetened beverages like soda, fruit drinks and sports drinks.

Choose Water Most Often

Water is a great choice to keep your child hydrated without adding extra calories or sugar.

Milk Matters!

Offer nutrient-packed milk to support growth. Choose whole milk at age one, and switch to 1% or fat-free milk after age two.

Dairy

Strong Bones

Dairy provides **more bone building nutrients** than any other food group.

Brain Buddy

Dairy provides seven to fourteen key nutrients for **early brain growth**.

Tummy Troubles?

If your child is lactose-intolerant, try these easy-to-digest choices:

- Lactose-free milk
- Yogurt
- Cheddar or string cheese

Fruits

Energy & Immune Support

Fruits provide **natural energy** for growing bodies and are packed with **immune-boosting nutrients** like Vitamin C.

Fresh & Frozen

Fresh and frozen fruits are great choices for packing in nutrition **without added sugar**. Limit fruit juice or fruit packaged in syrup.

Grains

Fill Up on Fiber

Fiber from whole grains supports a **healthy gut and digestion**.

Whole Grain Goodness

Choose **whole grains** most often, like oatmeal, whole wheat bread and 100% whole grain cereal.

Veggies

Color Counts!

Different colors of vegetables are **packed with unique nutrients** to help kids stay healthy.

Focus on Flavor

Try veggies prepared in a variety of ways:

- Add to a mixed dish
- Grill with protein
- Serve with dips or sauce

Protein

Protein Power!

Protein foods help growing bodies **build muscles** for movement and play.

Think Lean

Choose lean sources of protein most often:

- Chicken
- Fish
- Beans
- Tofu
- Lean beef
- Eggs
- Dairy foods

Making Mealtime an Adventure

Creating positive experiences for toddlers and preschoolers is a key step in building healthy habits, with food helping them try new flavors and textures. Here are some fun ways to make mealtime a positive and fun adventure for you and your child:

Cook Together

Invite your child to help with **simple kitchen tasks** like pouring, stirring or washing.



Food Exploration

Allow your child to **touch, smell and play** with their food to reduce fear of trying new things.



Be Artistic

Arrange your child's plate or use cookie cutters to create **fun shapes** like animals or rainbows.



Tips for Picky Eating

Be patient, as it may take children **10-15 exposures** before they accept a new food. Kids need to see, smell and touch before tasting and eating something new, so make sure to expose them to new tastes often.

It's All in the Family

Family meals are a good way to expose kids to new foods. Consider eating alongside your child and make trying new foods a **communal experience**.

Eat the Rainbow

Balance meals and snacks with choices **from all food groups** to maximize nutrition. A balanced diet for both meals and snacks is ideal.

Stay Positive

Avoid labeling your child as a picky eater as they learn to love new foods. Never bribe your child to eat or use food as punishment.

Food Themed Books and Games

Read food themed storybooks or games to help foster **curiosity and excitement** towards new foods.



Try Different Textures

Crunchy, mushy, sliced, diced, shredded and blended – offering foods in **different textures** will help your child explore the same foods in new ways.



Lean on Dairy

Offering foods like milk, yogurt and cheese with fruits, vegetables, grains or protein choices can be a **delicious, nutrient packed** way for your child to find new favorites.



The Power of Playtime!

The American Academy of Pediatrics recommends children ages two to five should be physically active throughout the day for growth and development. This includes:

- **At least 60 minutes** of structured physical activity (planned by an adult)
- **At least 60 minutes** of free play time
- **Limiting screen time** to one hour per day, with an emphasis on parent co-viewing and discussion to promote learning and interaction