

# Feeding Young Children



## Meal and snack routines are important

- Offer three meals and two to three snacks each day
- Leave two and a half to three hours between meals and snacks
- Offer only water between meals and snacks to help encourage a good appetite

## Children eat best when...

### The parent or caregiver decides:

- *Where to eat* – seated at the table for meals and snacks
- *When to eat* – keep to the meal and snack routine. Avoid extra snacking
- *What to offer* – be mindful of their likes but do not cater to them

### The child decides:

- *Which foods to eat* – from the foods you offer
- *How much to eat* – trust their tummy. They will eat the right amount for their growth and activity needs

## You are a role model and have an impact

- Take the time to enjoy mealtimes together
- Offer your child the same foods that you eat
- Serve foods family-style so they can pick which foods and how much from what is on the table
- Have pleasant conversation and avoid talking about how much or little they eat
- Put away toys and electronics (cell phones, tablets, TV) so the focus is on eating
- Your child may be messy when they eat. With time and practice, it will get better

## Remember that your child will eat best if:

- Mealtimes are relaxed
- They do not feel pressured to eat
- Foods are easy to eat without help
- They are allowed to stop eating or leave the table when they are full

## Meal plan using Canada's food guide

- Use the Food Guide plate to plan meals and snacks
- Include foods from all food groupings (vegetables and fruit, whole grains and protein foods)
- Include a vegetable or fruit (or both) at meals and snacks and choose ones with different textures, colours and shapes
- Flavour food with herbs and spices instead of salt or sugar
- Offer small portions of easy to chew foods
- If your child does not eat what you offered, do not go back to the kitchen to get other food



## Iron is important for growth and development

- Offer iron-rich foods two to three times each day
- Iron-rich foods include:
  - Legumes (kidney beans, lentils, chickpeas)
  - Soy products (tofu, edamame)
  - Eggs
  - Beef, dark meat chicken, turkey, pork, fish
  - Iron-fortified cereals
- Vitamin C (vegetables, fruit) helps absorb iron
- More than 3 cups (24 ounces or 750 mL) per day of milk doesn't leave room for enough iron rich foods

## Some foods are choking risks

### ✗ Avoid:

- Hard, small and round foods (whole grapes, raw carrots, apples, nuts, fruit with pits, hot dogs)
- Smooth and sticky foods (nut butter by spoon)

## Make these foods safer:

- Cook and chop these foods
- Thinly spread peanut and nut butters

## Baby teeth are important

- Help your child brush their teeth twice a day and floss once a day
- Help your child rinse their teeth with water when it is not possible to brush
- Take your child to their first dental visit by their first birthday. Routine check-ups are important

## For more information:

For more information or additional nutrition resources and videos, visit [unlockfood.ca](https://unlockfood.ca)

To speak to a registered dietitian at no cost, call Telehealth Ontario at **1-866-797-0000**.

To find out what is going well and where there might be room for improvement when it comes to your child's eating visit: [nutritionscreen.ca](https://nutritionscreen.ca)

## Drinks matter

### Milk:

- Continue to breastfeed for as long as you and your child want
- If breastmilk is offered, give a vitamin D supplement of 400 IU daily until two years
- If your child's milk source is not breastmilk, offer 3.25% M.F. cow's milk. At two years, switch to skim, 1% or 2% M.F.
- Your child only needs two cups (16 ounces or 500 mL) of milk each day
- Offer ½ cup (four ounces or 125 mL) servings

## Water and other beverages

- Offer water when your child is thirsty
- It is best to avoid juice and other beverages
- By 18 months, offer all beverages by open cup



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