

Put under Category: Across the Lifespan (Babies and Preschoolers)

Preschoolers: A time of developing a mind of their own!

Healthy eating is important to meet children's nutritional needs for growth and development. The amount of food children need varies on their body size, age, activity level, growth rate and medical conditions. Most preschoolers will not eat exactly the same amount of food from day to day. Some days they have no interest at all in eating. Other days their stomachs are like bottomless pits that can't get filled up. This is normal and by school age regular eating patterns will start to set in. As a parent or caregiver of a preschooler you determine when and what the children can eat. Let them decide how much to eat.

How much do preschoolers need?

Eating Well with Canada's Food Guide recommends children age 2 - 3 to consume each day:

Vegetables and Fruits	Grains	Milk and Alternatives	Meat and Alternatives
4	3	2	1

A child – size serving may be **half to the full serving size** from each food group.

An example of a day for a preschooler:

Breakfast: 1 slice of whole wheat toast with peanut butter
½ cup 100% juice

Snack: water
½ banana
3 – 5 crackers

Lunch: ½ - 1 cup macaroni and cheese
1/3 – ½ cup peas
½ - 1 cup milk

Snack: water
Small sliced apple
50 gram cheddar cheese (about the size of a white vinyl eraser)

Supper: 25 – 50 gram (1 – 2oz) chicken
¼ - ½ cup rice
¼ - ½ cup carrots
½ - 1 cup milk

Snack: 1 oatmeal cookie
½ cup milk

Snack Tip: Offer snacks about 1 ½ to 2 hours before meals. This will help to ensure a healthy appetite at mealtimes.

Fluid Tip: **Limit juice to 1 serving (1/2 cup) per day.** Water is the best thirst quencher!

I remember when my daughter was three years old. She would only eat cereal for breakfast, cereal for lunch and a chicken drumstick for supper. Like many mothers out there I wondered each day how long this food jag would last. It didn't last long, of course and she started eating a variety of foods again. Did your child have a food jag and would refuse to eat anything else? What foods did it revolve around and how long did it last?