

## ***BUILDING CAPABLE KIDS - CHILDREN AND FOOD***

### **HOW MUCH FOOD DOES A CHILD NEED TO EAT?**

In order to keep preschoolers in good health and supplied with energy for growth and learning, it is recommended that they receive the following amounts and types of food each day:

**MILK OR DAIRY PRODUCTS:** 2-3 CUPS OR SERVINGS. (1 cup of milk or yogurt, 1 1/2 ounces natural cheese, 2 ounces processed cheese)

**BREADS OR CEREALS, RICE AND PASTA:** 9 servings (1 slice of bread, 1 ounce ready-to-eat cereal, 1/2 cup cooked rice, cereal or pasta.)

**MEAT OR MEAT ALTERNATIVES:** 2 servings (one serving equals 1 egg or 1 ounce cooked meat or 2 tablespoons peanut butter).

**FRUITS AND/OR VEGETABLES:** 3-5 servings (1/2 cup vegetables or 3/4 cup vegetable juice)  
**FRUIT:** 2-4 servings (1 medium orange, apple or banana, 1/2 cup fruit or 3/4 cup fruit juice)

It is recommended you feed children mid-morning and mid-afternoon snacks as well as regular mealtimes. This will help keep youngsters from becoming tired and cross.

### **"NO DESSERT UNLESS..."**

"No dessert unless you clean your plate!" How many times have you heard this phrase? Instead of encouraging children to clean their plates, it can actually teach them to desire desserts above everything else when they should be learning to appreciate all kinds of foods.

### **YOU CAN TEACH YOUR CHILD TO BE A GOOD EATER**

Serve desserts high in nutrients such as fruit, pudding or custard. Desserts are not needed at every meal and should not be used as a reward for "cleaning your plate." Sugary foods like regular soft drinks, cookies, candy, and chewing gum can lead to tooth decay. They also replace more nutritious foods needed for growth and development.



Give your young child some finger foods as well as some that need to be

eaten with a fork or spoon. Children need to learn to feed themselves. Mash, grind, chop or slice foods so that they can be eaten with more ease. As the child develops teeth, serve foods that require chewing.

Serve new foods as single foods rather than in mixed dishes.

Give your child some choices in foods to eat.

Allow for quiet periods before meals.

Avoid making too many rules for mealtime. Do not expect your child to act more grown-up at the table than you do elsewhere. Praise your child for good eating behavior. Avoid being critical of poor eating behavior.

Strict rules about the food to be eaten do not help your child develop good feelings about food. Threats, bribes or coaxing your child to eat "just one more bite for Grandpa" should not be used.

Give your children attention when they are behaving well at the table so they do not need to misbehave in order to get attention.

Remember that all children and adults have times when they are not very hungry. A child will not starve from missing one meal.

Give everyone at the table a chance to share thoughts without being interrupted.

Make meals a time for relaxed family interaction. Turn off the T.V. and radio and try to avoid topics of discussion that will lead to arguments.

Offer nutritious snacks between meals. Several mini-meals often work best for young children.

Good eating habits can help promote good health and happiness for your children. Lifetime eating habits and attitudes about food usually are formed in early childhood. Young children are highly impressionable and easily pick up food likes, dislikes, and snacking habits of parents and older siblings. In fact, perhaps no other area are family influences stronger than in food preferences.

Sincerely,

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