Caring for Your Child
Feeding Your Child: Preschooler

- Preschoolers can usually walk and run around on their own without falling.
- Preschoolers may sit in a booster seat at the table.
- Most preschoolers can handle a fork and spoon on their own.
- Children should not walk and eat at the same time.

**Tips for Feeding a Preschooler:**

- Children at this stage still need 3 meals and 2 or 3 snacks a day.
- Limit your child’s amount of milk to 16-20 ounces per day.
- Your child should drink water. Water is better than juice.
  - If you choose to give your child juice, use 100% juice and limit the amount to no more than 4 ounces per day. You may mix the juice with water.
- If you have a family history of food allergies or think that your child is likely to have food allergies, speak with your doctor about foods to avoid.
- When trying new foods, watch and wait. After you give a new food for the first time, do not give any other new foods for about 3 days. Watch for signs that your child is having a reaction to the food. Some signs to watch for are rashes, vomiting and diarrhea. If these things happen, call your pediatrician. If there are no signs of problems for about 3 days, you may try another new food.
  - If your baby or anyone in your family has a food allergy, you should talk to an allergy doctor before you give your baby anything with peanut butter.
  - If your baby does not have any food allergies and no one in your family has any food allergies, and your baby is 6 months old or older, you may carefully give your baby foods with peanut butter.
  - If you give your child peanut butter, you have to be very careful that it is not a choking hazard. See information about choking risks below.
You may need to give your child a new food multiple times before she accepts it. If she does not like a food after several attempts, stop trying. Try that food again in a few weeks.

Preschoolers may like a food one day and not the next. At meal time, do not keep offering different foods until you find one that your child will eat. Offer several foods on the plate at each meal or snack. Include one favorite food.

The amount of food your child eats will be different at every meal and every day. This is OK. Serving sizes are estimates.

- Do not force your child to eat a set amount of food.
- Watch for signs that your child is hungry or full and feed your child as needed.

Meal time can be a family time. When possible, have the whole family sit at the table together during meals. Try to keep set meal times and start teaching your child table manners, like saying “please” and “thank you.” Give your child a chance to help by cleaning her plate after she is done eating.

**Sample Meal Pattern for Preschoolers:**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Breakfast</th>
<th>Option 1:</th>
<th>Option 2:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>About ¾ to 1 cup of unsweetened dry cereal (Cheerios, KIX, corn flakes, Rice Krispies) or prepared hot cereal (oatmeal, cream of wheat, grits) AND About ½ cup of chopped fruit AND About 4 ounces of milk</td>
<td>1 or 2 small pancakes AND ½ of a small piece of fruit AND About 4 ounces of milk</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Option 3:</td>
<td>Option 4:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>About 1 slice of wheat toast AND About ½ to 1 scrambled egg AND About 4 ounces of milk</td>
<td>About 4 ounces of yogurt without fruit added AND About ½ cup of chopped fruit AND About ¾ to 1 cup of unsweetened dry cereal (Cheerios, KIX, corn flakes, Rice Krispies) AND Water to drink</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

These foods are examples of choking hazards: Gum, hard candies, popcorn, whole grapes, whole cherry tomatoes, raisins, whole or circle cuts of hot dogs, nuts, whole or circle cuts of raw carrots, chips.

You should never give them to small children.

If you choose to give your baby peanut butter or a peanut-butter like spread, use just a thin layer. Children younger than elementary school age should never eat any peanut butter type products from a spoon or a finger. They may have trouble swallowing it.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Time of Day</th>
<th>Option 1</th>
<th>Option 2</th>
<th>Option 3</th>
<th>Option 4</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Mid-morning</td>
<td>About ½ cup of chopped vegetables AND About 2 Tablespoons of salad dressing for dipping AND Water to drink</td>
<td>About ½ cup of fruit or ½ of a small piece of fruit AND About 4 ounces of milk to drink</td>
<td>About 2-5 small crackers or small plain cookies AND Water to drink</td>
<td>About 2-4 small plain cookies (animal crackers type) AND Water to drink</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lunch</td>
<td>Option 1: About 1 or 2 ounces of meat, fish or tofu AND About 1 slice wheat toast AND About ¼ to ½ cup of vegetables AND 4 to 6 ounces of milk</td>
<td>Option 2: ½ peanut butter and jelly sandwich on wheat bread AND About ¼ to ½ cup vegetables AND About 4 to 6 ounces of milk</td>
<td>Option 3: About ¼ cup cooked or canned beans that have been rinsed and drained AND 3-5 crackers AND About ¼ to ½ cup fruit AND 4 to 6 ounces of milk</td>
<td>Option 4: Leftovers from a family meal that has meat or tofu in it AND About ½ cup of vegetables AND About 4 to 6 ounces of milk</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Afternoon snack</td>
<td>Option 1: About ¼ to ½ cup of fruit or vegetables AND Water to drink</td>
<td>Option 2: About 2-5 crackers AND 1 ounce (1 deli slice) cheese or 1 Tablespoon of peanut butter AND Water to drink</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dinner</td>
<td>Option 1: 1 to 2 ounces of meat ,fish or tofu AND 2-5 crackers AND About ¼-½ cup of vegetables AND About 4 ounces of milk</td>
<td>Option 2: 1 small slice of thin crust cheese pizza AND About ½ cup of vegetables AND About 4 ounces of milk</td>
<td>Option 3: About ¼ cup cooked or canned beans that have been rinsed and drained AND 1 slice wheat toast AND About ¼-½ cup of vegetables AND About 4 ounces of milk</td>
<td>Option 4: A packaged Toddler or Preschool meal AND About ¼-½ cup of vegetables AND About 4 ounces of milk</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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