

# Raising healthy kids

**Living healthily is probably the best lesson you can teach your child — and it is one that will stay with him for life**





**A** healthier child has the potential for a brighter future. Hence it makes perfect sense to start cultivating the habit of maintaining good health from young. Helping your child develop and maintain good habits from young can help prevent health problems when he grows up.

### All about eating

One habit that is important to encourage is the habit of eating healthily. Some parents have kids who are picky eaters. On the other end of the spectrum, some kids simply eat too much.

Chubby children may be cute, but not all children will eventually grow out of their chubbiness. All that excess weight may lead to chronic health problems such as high blood pressure and diabetes. An

overweight child may suffer from issues with self-esteem if he gets teased by his friends because of his size.

The main rule of thumb when it comes to maintaining weight is energy balance:

#### Energy input = Energy output

(from what  
he eats)

(from the  
activities he does)

If he eats more than the energy he uses, he will gain weight. The energy that is not used is collected in the body as fat.

There are two easy ways to help your child live a healthy lifestyle and keep obesity at bay:

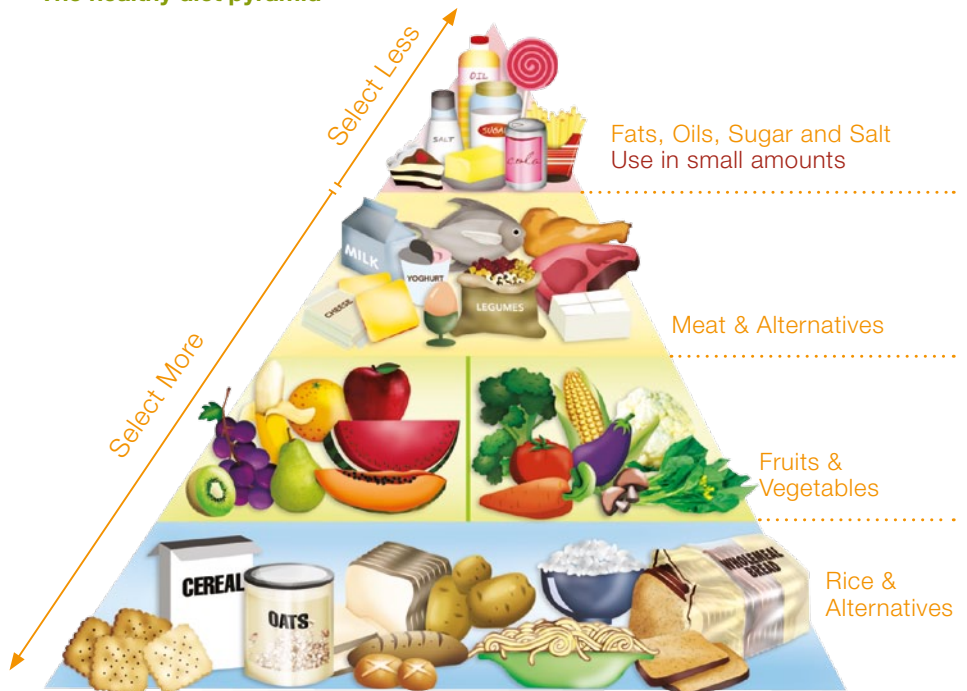
1. Eat healthily
2. Stay active



## Eat healthily

Knowing what kind of food to eat more or less of can help to keep your child on the path to good health. The healthy diet pyramid is an easy-to-understand guide to better nutrition.

### The healthy diet pyramid



There are four food groups:

- Rice and alternatives
- Fruits
- Vegetables
- Meat and alternatives

Eat more food from the bottom of the pyramid, and less from the top. Enjoy a variety from each group at every meal. A good mix of these will provide the nutrients that your child needs.



“An overweight child may suffer from issues with self-esteem if he gets teased by his friends because of his size.”

## What and how much should your child eat

When planning your child's daily meals, it is important to include the right number of servings from the following food groups to ensure your child obtain the nutrients he needs.

Food Group	Number of Servings /Day
<b>Rice and Alternatives</b>	3-4
<b>Whole-grains</b> (Do include the recommended whole-grain serving as part of the Rice and Alternatives serving needs)	1-2
<b>Fruits</b>	1
<b>Vegetables</b>	1
<b>Meat and Alternatives</b>	1
<b>Milk</b> (Do include the recommended milk serving in addition to the Meat and Alternatives serving needs.)	500ml

## Know the serving sizes

The table below illustrates the size of one serving for each of the food groups.

### Examples of one serving

<b>Rice and Alternatives</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 2 slices bread (60g)</li> <li>• ½ bowl* rice (100g)</li> <li>• ½ bowl noodles or beehoon (100g)</li> <li>• 4 plain biscuits (40g)</li> <li>• 1 thosai (60g)</li> <li>• 2 small chapatis (60g)</li> <li>• 1 large potato (180g)</li> <li>• 1 ½ cup plain cornflakes (40g)</li> </ul>	<b>Vegetables</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• ¾ mug** cooked leafy or non-leafy vegetables (100g)</li> <li>• ¼ round plate+ cooked vegetables</li> <li>• 150g raw leafy vegetables</li> <li>• 100g raw non-leafy vegetables</li> </ul>
<b>Fruits</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 1 small apple, orange, pear or mango (130g)</li> <li>• 1 wedge pineapple, papaya or watermelon (130g)</li> <li>• 10 grapes or longans (50g)</li> <li>• 1 medium banana</li> <li>• ¼ cup*** dried fruit (40g)</li> <li>• 1 glass pure fruit juice (250ml)</li> </ul>	<b>Meat and Alternatives</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 1 palm-sized piece fish, lean meat or skinless poultry (90g)</li> <li>• 2 small blocks soft beancurd (170g)</li> <li>• ¾ cup cooked pulses (e.g. lentils, peas, beans) (120g)</li> </ul>

\*Rice bowl

\*\*250ml mug

\*\*\*250ml cup

+10-inch plate

# Healthy Snacks for Kids

Here are some ideas of what you can give your child between his meals if he is hungry:

## Healthy trail mix

Mix one cup of whole-grain cereal with  $\frac{1}{4}$  cup of chopped nuts (almonds, walnuts, cashews) and  $\frac{1}{4}$  cup of chopped dried fruit (apricots, prunes, raisins and cranberries) for a healthy snack that you can take anywhere.



## Frozen treats

Freeze fruits such as seedless grapes, kiwifruit or strawberries for an icy-cool treat that is low in sugar and high in vitamins. For extra fun, skewer a few fruit pieces on a satay stick or toothpick before freezing.

## Yoghurt pots

Top a cup of low-fat, low-sugar yoghurt with granola or fresh fruit for a quick calcium boost.



## Easy guacamole

Mash a ripe avocado with a squeeze of lemon juice, a pinch of salt and some chopped ripe tomatoes to make a mild, nutritious guacamole that even your picky child will love. Serve with plain tortilla chips or whole-grain crackers.



## Cheese and crackers

Top whole-grain crackers with a soft cheese spread or a piece of tasty cheddar for an easy-to-prepare snack that is rich in calcium.



## Veggies and dip

Cut cucumber, celery, carrots and/or capsicums into sticks and serve with a small side of low-fat dressing. This is a savoury snack that is easy to prepare in advance — just prepare the veggies and store in an air-tight container in the fridge.





Want to provide healthier options for your child and for your family? Do look out for the Healthier Choice Symbol (HCS) on your next trip to the supermarket.

Food products with HCS are generally:

- Lower in fat.
- Lower in salt.
- Lower in sugar.
- Some of them are also higher in calcium and whole-grains compared to similar products.

You can include a variety of HCS products as part of a healthy, balanced diet. However, like all food, they should be eaten in moderation.

### Tips on introducing a healthier diet

- Provide your child's meals at regular times every day. He is less likely to snack if he knows when his next meal is coming.
- Use healthier cooking methods such as steaming, boiling and grilling. Avoid deep frying.
- Select lean cuts and remove the skin from meat and poultry.
- Choose snacks with the Healthier Snack Symbol or cut up some crunchy fruits and vegetables for a mid-day snack.
- Offer water to your child. Water is best for quenching thirst. Add lemon slices or mint to add flavour or variety.
- Use sweetened and fat spreads such as jam, kaya and margarine sparingly.
- Choose fresh food rather than preserved food. Most fresh food contains glutamate, a natural taste enhancer which provides natural flavours without

the need to add salt and sauces.

- Spice up meals by using natural seasonings such as parsley, coriander, onions and garlic. They can enhance the flavour of dishes without increasing its salt content.
- When introducing a new food to your child, do so in small portions over a period of time. Your child may not accept these food the first time. Be patient as it may be necessary to introduce a new food to your child several times before he accepts it.
- Pace the meal. Avoid rushing through the meal by encouraging your child to chew well and savour the flavour. This will help your child avoid over-eating.
- Shop together at the supermarket and show your child how to make healthier food choices and show him how to watch out for HCS products (see box).
- Cut the vegetables in interesting shapes and sizes to make these more appealing to your child.
- Replace white rice, white bee hoon or pasta with brown or red rice, brown rice bee hoon or whole-wheat pasta.
- Do not use food to reward or punish your child for his good or bad behaviour. By using food as a reward or punishment, you may increase his desire to consume these food.
- Eat healthily and be a good role model for your child.



## Stay active

As a parent, you want your child to be active and healthy. Your preschooler should be encouraged to have at least 180 minutes of physical activity spread out over the course of a day. Consider spreading the physical activity in between periods of inactivity.

### Have a fun, active day with your child with this example of a healthy schedule:

- 8am: Breakfast
- 9am: Have two hours of learning, reading or playtime
- 11am: Play an indoor game or get your child to give you a hand in preparing lunch
- Noon: Lunch
- 1pm: Nap time
- 2pm: More learning, reading or games
- 5pm: Take your child outside for some physical fun. Walk to the neighbourhood playground or arrange an indoor play date with a friend for the kids to play games and dance to their favourite songs.
- 6pm: Dinner
- 7pm: Free-and-easy activities to wind down the day. Enjoy a stroll in the park or read a book with your child.
- 9pm: Bedtime



However, if a child has a physical limitation or medical condition, parents should seek the doctor's advice on the types and amount of physical activity that are best for the child.

### Here are more tips to keep your child active:

- Have fun with play. Try various games and sports to find one that your child likes and will enjoy over and over again.
- Make it fun. You can even put your child in charge and let him choose an activity to play. The most important part is to do something active together.



- Keep moving. Break up long periods of inactivity (i.e. lack of physical activity) by injecting 5-10 minutes of fun and play in between.
- Limit your child's time spent on watching TV, playing computer or video games to less than two hours each day.
- Commit to a specified amount of time for outdoor activities/games each day. It could be something as simple as a walk in the park or a visit to the neighbourhood playground.
- Praise your child. Motivate your child by letting him know that you like what he is doing.
- Gifts to 'move it, move it'. When choosing a present for your child, pick one that encourages activity, such as a bicycle, a hula hoop, balls, kites and so on.
- Set a good example and participate enthusiastically in different types of physical activities with your child. Get the whole family involved and be active!



**Children should engage in play in a safe environment under supervision.**

Children at this stage are full of energy and it is amazing what they can do. Although their ability to run, jump and climb is good, their judgement and self-control are still developing. Be aware of your child's surroundings and never underestimate what he might try to do.




 Parent-Child Activities

Take time out to bond with your child while enjoying these fun-learning activities

# Have fun with food!

## Rhyme riddles

Make up riddles and prompt your child to answer with a rhyming food item.

### For example:

It's a grain.

It's long, it's white, it's nice.

It's \_\_\_\_\_ (rice).

You need protein to be healthy and fit.

What should you eat?

I'd say it's \_\_\_\_\_ (meat).

Red means stop, slow down when it's amber.

But green, as you know, is cool as \_\_\_\_\_ (cucumber).

## Build a meal

Shop groceries with your child and prepare a meal together. Your child can help to perform easier tasks like washing lettuce or scrubbing the potatoes. Try to stack the food items up to form a 3-dimensional pyramid (try using apples). Explain 2D and 3D shapes as you do this.

## Pyramid game

1. Cut out a large triangle and divide it into four tiers, as in the Healthy Diet Pyramid.
2. Cut out pictures of food and drink from magazines and newspapers.
3. Get your child to identify the items and put them into the correct category.
4. Along the way, explain why each food belongs there, what nutrients it provides, and why you should or should not eat it too often.