

Turn Off the TV...Tune into Outdoor Adventure

EARLY NUTRITION AND FOOD EXPERIENCES

Why is nutrition education important for preschool children? Developing good eating habits begins when there is learning readiness and potential for change. A young child's natural curiosity and interest in food leads to early formation of habits, preferences and attitudes that will last a lifetime. For preschoolers, food handling skills contribute to the development of small and gross motor skills.

Nutrition related activities can enhance a child's emotional, social, physical and intellectual development through a wide variety of learning experiences. While the children are learning food handling skills, they will be learning socialization skills in getting along with others. They will learn about talking and listening to others. They will learn about sitting still in a group to work with food or to share in tasting. They will learn about taking turns, sharing equipment and working together as a team or independently. They may help hold a dish or participate in scrubbing the table or work surface.

Nutrition education taps into something that is familiar to children—food and eating—and new learning can be built from this. While young children are not capable of abstract learning, nutrition education allows for active learning where they can see, hear, touch, taste and move in order to learn. A child can learn where food comes from, how to prepare it, and how healthy food choices lead to healthy bodies. Most of all, the children are learning by doing. Not only are they gaining skills in food preparation and in food choices, they are learning a process by which to figure things out. They are developing independence and learning to think for themselves.

Food advertisements on TV also impact food choices. A recent study of preschoolers found that even brief exposure to food commercials can influence their food preferences. The American Academy of Pediatrics recently updated their policy statement on Children, Adolescents, and Television. The statement describes the possible negative health effects of television viewing on children and adolescents, such as violent or aggressive behavior, substance use, sexual activity, obesity, poor body image and decreased school performance.



Turn Off the TV...Tune into Outdoor Adventure

FOOD GUIDE PYRAMID

The *Food Guide Pyramid* is an outline of what to eat each day based on the *U.S. Dietary Guidelines*. It is not a rigid prescription, but rather a general guide, using the five major food groups, that lets people choose a healthful diet that is right for each individual.

The *Food Guide Pyramid* also calls for eating a variety of foods to get the needed nutrients and at the same time the amount of calories to maintain healthy weight.

The *Food Guide Pyramid* shows a range of recommended servings for each food group. The number of servings that are right for a person depends on how many calories they need, which in turn depends on age, sex, and level of activity. Almost everyone should have at least the lowest number of servings in the ranges. It also gives the size of a recommended serving.

FOOD GUIDE PYRAMID FOR YOUNG CHILDREN

Some of the key elements of the *Food Guide Pyramid* are:

- It is based on **proportion**. Choose more servings from the bottom of the pyramid and fewer from the top.
- It is based on **variety**. Eat a wide range of foods from each of the five food groups.
- It emphasizes **limiting fat**. Choose fewer fatty foods. Foods high in fat are shown on the pyramid by a small dot.
- It emphasizes **limiting sugar**. Choose fewer foods without added sugar. Foods high in added sugar are shown on the pyramid by a small triangle.

Developed by: Sharon K. Junge, NFCS Advisor, UCCE, Placer & Nevada Counties

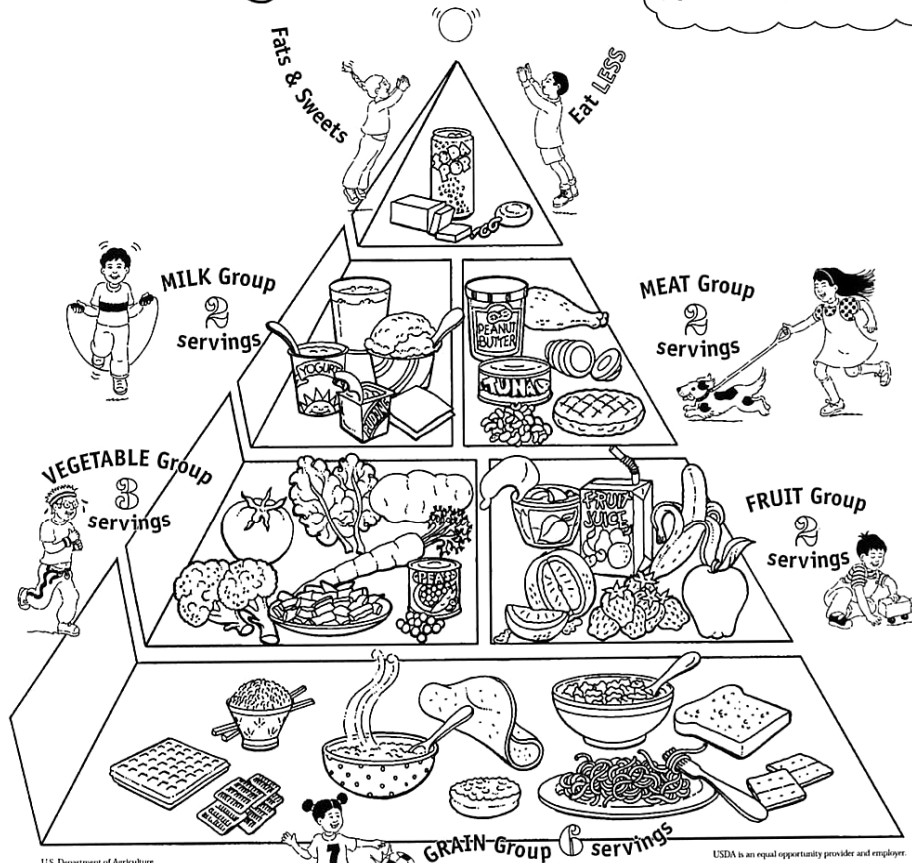


Turn Off the TV...Tune into Outdoor Adventure

FOOD Guide PYRAMID

for Young Children

A Daily Guide for 2- to 6-Year-Olds



U.S. Department of Agriculture
Center for Nutrition Policy and Promotion

January 2000
Program Aid 1651

USDA is an equal opportunity provider and employer.

FOOD IS FUN and learning about food is fun, too. Eating foods from the Food Guide Pyramid and being physically active will help you grow healthy and strong.

WHAT COUNTS AS ONE SERVING?

GRAIN GROUP 1 slice of bread 1/2 cup of cooked rice or pasta 1/2 cup of cooked cereal 1 ounce of ready-to-eat cereal	FRUIT GROUP 1 piece of fruit or melon wedge 3/4 cup of juice 1/2 cup of canned fruit 1/4 cup of dried fruit	MEAT GROUP 2 to 3 ounces of cooked lean meat, poultry, or fish. 1/2 cup of cooked dry beans, or 1 egg counts as 1 ounce of lean meat. 2 tablespoons of peanut butter count as 1 ounce of meat.
VEGETABLE GROUP 1/2 cup of chopped raw or cooked vegetables 1 cup of raw leafy vegetables	MILK GROUP 1 cup of milk or yogurt 2 ounces of cheese	FATS AND SWEETS Limit calories from these.

Four- to 6-year-olds can eat these serving sizes. Offer 2- to 3-year-olds less, except for milk. Two- to 6-year-old children need a total of 2 servings from the milk group each day.

EAT a variety of FOODS AND ENJOY!