

# E-Learning Nutrition for Children

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## Introduction

With the incidence of childhood obesity doubling in the last 20 years, nutrition for children has become a very important issue.

Studies show that overweight children almost always grow into overweight adults. However, children who have healthy eating habits carry those habits over to adulthood, so they're less likely to be overweight, get diabetes, cancer, or heart disease.

In fact, because so many kids nowadays are overweight, they're getting diseases that used to only affect adults, such as type 2 diabetes and high blood pressure.

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## Food Pyramid -

[\*Link to food pyramid chart\*](#)

The food pyramid per day for children should include 6 servings of grain, 3 servings of vegetables, 2 servings of fruit, 2 servings of dairy, 2 servings of meat and minimal amounts of fats and sweets.

When selecting grains, be aware of the following: Whole grains are best. White bread & white rice (and white

foods in general) have very little nutritional value. Just because the bread label says “wheat bread” doesn’t mean it is whole grain. Some companies take white bread & add food coloring, then call it wheat bread. They can get away with this because even white bread is made from wheat. Look for the words “whole grain” or “whole wheat”. Check the nutrition label. Whole grain bread should have a few grams of fiber per serving. Brown rice is better than white, sweet potatoes are better than white.

Regarding vegetables: Iceberg lettuce has no nutritional value. Dark green lettuces like romaine are better. Tomato sauce (1/2 cup) and salsa (2 tablespoons) count as a serving of veggies. Ketchup does not. French fries are not a vegetable. Deep fried veggies, or veggies with a lot of dip, still have nutrients, but they’re also high in fat & calories. Keep them to a minimum. Canned veggies are high in salt & preservatives. If they’re all you have, they’re better than nothing, but fresh & frozen are best.

Use fresh fruits whenever possible. Canned & dried fruits have added sugar. Applesauce is a good way to get fruit; watch out for added sugar. Fruit juice is a way to get fruit into the diet. However, be aware that many “juices” have no real juice in them. Read the labels.

Dairy products include such items as Milk (use 2% for kids over age 2), Cheese, and Yogurt

Regarding meats, fish and poultry; mostly use chicken, turkey, and fish, not too much red meat. Eggs are considered meats, however do have cholesterol issues. Nuts contain proteins but also contain fat as in oil and therefore are higher in calories. Deep fried & breaded meats, fast food, hot dogs & cold cuts are OK once in a while.

Candy, cakes, cookies, ice cream, chips, anything you would consider “junk food” should be eaten very occasionally. The high levels of fat and sugars can create problems for a well balanced and nutritious diet.

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## Portion Size

When attempting to judge portion size for children, a good rule of thumb is to start out giving less than you think they will eat. A standard guideline to use for children is one tablespoon of each food for each year of age. For example, a three year old eating chicken, mashed potatoes and green peas would receive three tablespoons of each food item for his/her meal.

Try not to scold children for not “cleaning their plate”. Also do not force them to eat more. Their bodies “know” when they have had enough. However, if they are hungry an hour after lunch because they did not eat enough, don’t give them a snack. Before long, they will learn to judge how much they need to eat at a meal so as to not be hungry too soon before the next meal.

### [Link to Portion Size Chart](#)

The amount of food that most of us are used to eating is actually 2 or 3 servings of an item at a time. If you open the [Portion Size Chart](#), you will notice that a “serving” of a given item is generally much smaller than the average American serving. Study and/or print a copy of the chart so that you can become more familiar with appropriate portion size.

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## Healthy Eating Tips

No dessert until after dinner:

- Junk food is ok in moderation, but children need to eat healthy food first to make sure they are getting adequate nutrition.
  - If they fill up on healthy food there is no room for junk
  - If they fill up on junk food there is no room for nutritious foods.

Go outside and play:

- Kids need exercise and fresh air to stay healthy and control their weight. Children with physical limitations still need as much physical movement, as medically recommended, to keep them healthy.

Variety is the spice of life:

- Different foods provide different nutrients. It is important for the human body to receive food from all 4 food groups to maintain a healthy balance.

Eat your vegetables (and fruits):

- Fruits and vegetables are loaded with vitamins and antioxidants that help prevent cancer.
- They have a high fiber content which helps to keep you regular and may aid in colon cancer prevention.
- Vegetables and most fruits are low in calories so you can eat a lot of them without putting on extra weight.

[Link to More Healthy Tips](#)

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## Juice and More

Vegetable and fruit juices are healthy. They have antioxidants and vitamins that the fruit and vegetables themselves have. However, they have little to no fiber content and may have added sugar. It is suggested that you limit children's juice intake to one glass (6 oz.) a day. Most of a child's fruit servings should come from fresh fruit when possible. Avoid products that say *juice drink*, *juice beverage* or *juice cocktail*. These are mostly sugar and artificial flavoring with little or no real fruit juice. Try to purchase 100% fruit juice whenever possible.

### MORE:

- Eat foods in their natural state - Processed foods such as frozen dinners and lunch meats are loaded with salt, sugar and preservatives. It's best to buy fresh foods and prepare them yourself.
- Look for whole grain products - Whole grain breads, wheat pasta, brown rice, oatmeal.
- Eat fish about twice a week - Baked or broiled are the healthiest ways to prepare fish. Fish has Omega-3 fatty acids which are good for the body.
- Everything in moderation - try to use the portion size chart whenever possible.

- Make a habit of sitting down when eating. Standing in front of the fridge and eating can lead to overeating. When watching TV and eating, you are not paying attention to the food and this may lead to overeating also.

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## Picky Eaters

Dealing with children who fuss over what they are served can be a real trial. Trying some different approaches to food may help. Put healthy elements into favorite foods. For example, a child who enjoys pancakes might really like blueberry or banana pancakes. Keep healthy “finger food” available for snacking. Repeal the “Clean Plate” rule. Children know when they have had enough. Following the portion size chart will be helpful in this area too. Provide treats in moderation. When “sweets” or “junk food” is forbidden, children find a way to access it anyway and they may rebel by refusing to eat the more nutritious foods in a meal. Keep offering foods that have previously been refused. Children have to try new foods often 9-13 times before they grow to like it. Keep offering the food now and again and suggest they try it each time. They may grow to really enjoy it. **THINK COLOR!** Some of healthiest foods are the most colorful. A diet filled with colorful fruits and vegetables is loaded with good nutrition and low in fat and calories. White foods, like bread, pasta and rice have little nutritional value.

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## Healthy Snacks & Vending Machines

Cookies, candies and chips all taste great and are easy snacks to give to children. However, they are filled with hollow calories and artificial ingredients that are not beneficial to a healthy diet. Some snack-type foods that are better for you include: cheese cubes, fruit, crackers with peanut butter or celery with peanut butter - peanut butter is rather high in fat but is nutritious, so use in moderation- or vanilla yogurt with fresh fruit or cereal added - most yogurts with fruit or granola already added are higher in sugar content.

Vending machines are loaded with junk food choices. Some options are better than others and occasional junk food is not bad - just as long as it is occasional. Granola and cereal bars have a

lot of sugar and fat but are better choices than cookies because they also focus on nutrients in their product. Skim or 1% milk is better than whole milk, except for babies and toddlers. Fruit “drinks” are mostly sugar. Try to select fruit “juices”, striving for the 100% juice option. Fruit cups have high levels of sugar. However, if no fresh fruit is available, a fruit cup is preferable to a candy bar. If you are looking for something salty, a bag of Chex mix has less fat than a bag of potato chips or cheese and crackers. Dried fruit such as raisins or cranberries are healthier than fruit rollups or fruit chews. Try to make better educated choices when faced with a vending machine.

[Link to Vending Machine Handout](#)

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## Summary

With statistics continuing to show increasing obesity trends in our children, it is imperative that we work toward teaching better eating and health habits. Guiding their choices based on the food pyramid and maintaining good portion control are two ways of instilling better eating habits in our children and youth. Making smart choices in the foods we eat will set healthy habits. Selecting “fresh” as often as possible is the best way to select fruits and vegetables. Staying away from high amounts of fats and sugars in food products is another good habit to set. Healthy snacks and making intelligent choices at the vending machine are all ways to productively work toward better eating habits.

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## Evaluation

Please print out the linked activity and evaluation sheets. Complete both sheets and send them to Beth Sweet, Training Dept., Main St. so that you are credited with taking the course. You are also encouraged to print out the handouts as reference material. Thank you.

[Activity Sheet](#)

[Evaluation](#)

[Link to Resources](#)

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