

# Feeding Your Child from age 1 to 5



As a parent or caregiver, you have nourished your child since birth. As your child continues to grow, he or she will need your guidance to build a trusting relationship with food and eating. How you feed your child is just as important as what you feed your child. This booklet can help guide you as you continue to feed and nourish your child from ages 1 to 5.

**If your child has a medical condition or you think your child may have a food allergy or intolerance, talk to a health care provider or registered dietitian. This will ensure your child gets the nutrients she or he needs.**



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# Roles at Mealtimes

You and your child both have a role at mealtime.

## Parents and caregivers decide:

### **WHAT** food and beverages are served.

- Offer a variety of foods.
- Offer your child the same foods as the rest of the family.

### **WHEN** food is served.

- Offer three meals and up to three snacks around the same time every day.

### **WHERE** food is served.

- Serve meals at the table and eat together whenever possible.

## Children decide:

### **IF** they are going to eat.

### **HOW MUCH**

they are going to eat.

- Trust that your child knows when he or she is hungry or full.





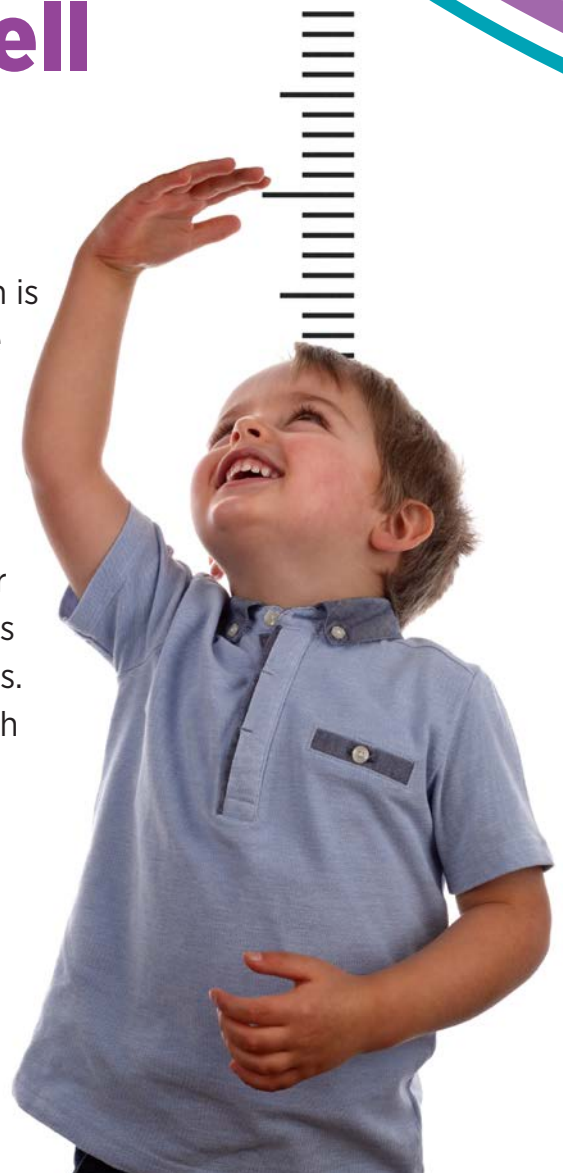
# Eat Well to Grow Well

**Food and beverages provide nutrients children need for growth, energy and a healthy body.**

Children grow and develop at different rates. Their growth is the best way to tell they are eating enough. If children are growing well, staying active and seem happy and healthy, they are likely doing fine.

Regular meals and snacks can provide most vitamins and minerals children need - except for vitamin D. It is hard for young children to get enough vitamin D from food sources alone. Fatty fish and egg yolks are the only natural sources. In Canada, cow's milk and margarine must be fortified with vitamin D. All children could benefit from vitamin D supplementation.

Discuss your child's vitamin and mineral needs with your health care provider or a registered dietitian.



**Each child has a unique growth pattern, which can make him or her shorter, taller, lighter or heavier than other children of the same age. Try not to compare your child with other children.**

**Did You Know...** Healthy eating and physical activity go hand in hand. Unplug devices, limit screen time and encourage your child to walk, run and play every day. Join in the fun too! Learn about getting active with your child at [manitobainmotion.ca](http://manitobainmotion.ca) (search families and children).

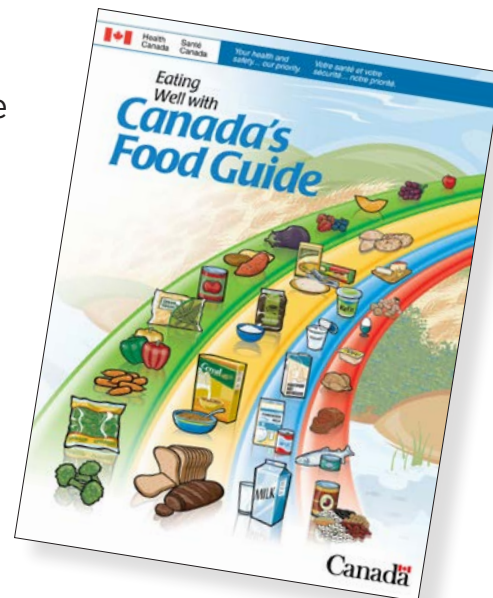
# What to Feed Your Child

## Healthy eating habits begin when children are young.

Use Canada's Food Guide when planning meals. Visit the Health Canada website and search for *Eating Well with Canada's Food Guide*. The guide is also available in other languages at [healthcanada.gc.ca/foodguide](http://healthcanada.gc.ca/foodguide).

The four food groups outlined in the guide provide the variety and nutrition children need.

- Vegetables and Fruit
- Grain Products
- Milk and Alternatives
- Meat and Alternatives



Offer your child foods and beverages at regular times throughout the day.

Plan for three meals and up to three snacks each day. Younger children have small tummies and need to eat often.

**Did You Know...** Fat provides energy and essential fatty acids which are important for growth and brain development in children. 'Low fat' and 'light' products are not recommended. Regularly offer your child foods that naturally contain fat such as avocado, whole milk, cheese, eggs, nut butters, meat and fish. Use vegetable oils in cooking.

## How much to feed your child

Children's appetites change from day to day. Some days they may not eat much and there may be some food waste.

Start with a small amount of food and let your child ask for more if he or she is still hungry. Older children can learn to serve themselves from the table.



# Vegetables and Fruit



**Vegetables and fruit contain vitamins and minerals for growth and development, and fibre to help with bowel movements (pooping).**

- Offer your child a variety of different colored vegetables and fruit every day.

## Ideas to help your child enjoy vegetables and fruit:

- Serve vegetables and fruit in different ways:
  - steamed, grilled or fresh
  - added to a smoothie, stir-fry or pizza, or baked into muffins
  - offered with a dip like hummus or yogurt
- Try a vegetable or fruit that your child hasn't tried before.
- Serve a new vegetable or fruit with a familiar food.
- Show your child where food comes from by growing a garden together or visiting a local farm.



**Fresh, frozen and canned vegetables and fruit are all nutritious.**



# Grain Products

**Grain products provide fibre, iron and B vitamins plus they give children energy to run and play.**

Grains include wheat, oats, rice, barley and millet, as well as foods made from grains like bread, tortillas, bannock, roti, naan bread, muffins, pancakes, cereal and pasta.

- Offer a variety of whole grains, like barley, brown rice, oats, quinoa and wild rice.
- Look for the word “whole” in front of the grain on the ingredient list.



## Ideas to help your child enjoy grain products:

- Add fruit to cereal.
- Mix two types of cereal for a variety of flavour and texture.
- Try a different grain like couscous, millet, bulgur and quinoa.
- Add grains to soups or stews.
- Make sandwiches using a whole grain bun or wrap instead of bread.
- Bake together.





# Milk and Alternatives

**Milk contains protein and calcium, with vitamin D added to build strong muscles, bones and teeth. Milk products and foods made from milk have other nutrients for energy and brain development.**

Cheese, yogurt, cottage cheese, kefir (a fermented milk product), fortified goat's milk and foods made with milk, such as smoothies and soups, are all great choices.

- Whole (homogenized, 3.25%) cow's milk is recommended for younger children. Once a child is 2 years of age or older, lower-fat milk (2%, 1%, skim) and fortified soy beverages can be offered.



**Did You Know...** Non-dairy beverages like almond, potato or rice beverages, and coconut milk are not included in the Milk and Alternatives group of Canada's Food Guide because they contain very little protein. Children over the age of two years can be given non-dairy beverages that are fortified or enriched. Fortified non-dairy beverages can be a source of calcium and vitamin D.

## Ideas to help your child enjoy milk:

- Offer small amounts of milk regularly each day.
- Offer milk either warm or cold.
- Serve milk in a fun cup or with a straw.
- Add milk, powdered milk or canned evaporated milk to recipes such as soups, casseroles and oatmeal.

# Meat and Alternatives

**Meat and alternatives provide protein to help muscles and bones grow, and iron to carry oxygen in the blood.**

Some examples are: beef, pork, poultry, lamb, wild game, fish, shellfish, legumes, eggs, nuts, seeds, peanut butter and soy products like tofu.

- Offer meat alternatives such as eggs, beans, lentils and tofu often.
- Try to include fish such as salmon, tuna, trout, pickerel, char, herring or sardines at least twice a week.
- Limit deli meats and other processed meats because they are high in salt.



## Ideas to help your child enjoy meat and alternatives:

- Add meat to sauces, soups, stews and chili.
- Use fish or ground meats like turkey, pork and bison in burgers, meatballs and meatloaf.
- Use split peas, beans and lentils in soups, casseroles, salads, burgers and burritos, or mash them into dips and baked goods.
- Try different soybean based foods, like tempeh and steamed edamame.
- Offer peanut butter or other nut and seed butters as part of snacks or meals.

**Vegetarian diets** can be healthy for children if meals and snacks are planned wisely.

**Did You Know...** Canned “light” tuna (Skipjack, Yellowfin, Tongol) is low in mercury and may be offered regularly. Canned “white” tuna (Albacore) contains larger amounts of mercury and needs to be limited to 75 g (1 serving) a week for children ages 1 to 4 years, and 150 g (2 servings) a week for children ages 5 to 11. Fresh or frozen tuna should be eaten less often. Find out more at [manitoba.ca](http://manitoba.ca) (search mercury in fish).

The iron from animal food sources is easily absorbed by the body while iron from plant-based sources is not. To increase the absorption of iron from plant-based foods, include a food rich in vitamin C such as broccoli, melon, pineapple, strawberries, oranges, peppers, or tomato with the meal or snack.

# Beverages

**Both the foods and beverages offered to children are important to help them grow well.**

Health Canada recommends continuing to breastfeed children until age 2 or older. Breastfeeding continues to provide health benefits for both mother and child.

**Water** is best to satisfy thirst. Provide plain tap water between meals and more often on hot, humid days. Bottled water is not necessary unless your local tap or well water is unsafe to drink.



**Milk** is a source of protein, fat, calcium and vitamin D. Offer your child whole (homogenized, 3.25%) cow's milk or fortified goat's milk. After age 2, lower-fat milk (2%, 1%, skim) and fortified soy beverages can be offered.

**Juice** is a source of concentrated sugar and can contribute to tooth decay. Children can fill up on juice which leaves less room for food. Offer a fruit or vegetable instead of juice. If you offer juice, limit to 125 ml (½ cup) per day. Diluting juice is not needed.

**Pop, diet pop, fruit beverages, hot or iced teas and coffees, herbal tea, lemonade, slushy-type drinks, sports drinks, energy drinks and vitamin waters** provide little nutritional value. They may contain sugar or artificial sweeteners, sodium/salt and caffeine, which are not recommended for children.

**Did You Know...** Drinking from a sippy cup or bottle after the age of 12 months can increase a child's chance of getting cavities (tooth decay) or having speech problems. Offer your child fluids in an open cup to help build muscles needed for talking and swallowing.



# Mealtimes

**For young children, mealtimes are a way to learn about healthy food choices, table manners, social skills, and family values. Eating together can happen at breakfast, lunch or supper!**

## Ideas to help keep mealtimes pleasant and relaxed:

- Plan meals ahead of time and include simple meals like sandwiches or eggs and toast on busy nights.
- Be flexible and adjust schedules to make time to eat and enjoy food together.
- Cook once and eat twice by planning to use leftovers as another meal.
- Remove distractions such as toys, and turn off the TV, computer and cell phones.
- Try a theme night for added fun.
- Be patient when your child is eating and trying new foods.
- Focus on each other and not on food.
- Encourage everyone to share stories from their day.
- Be a good role model.



**Studies show that eating meals together is linked to better food choices, improved grades in school and healthier weights in children.**

# “Picky” Eaters

Some children are more cautious with food, and may need to be exposed to a new food over 12 times before they will try it.



## Ideas to help your child feel good about eating:

- Do not label your child as a “picky” eater.
- Include your child in menu planning and meal preparation. Your child may be more eager to try his or her own food creation.
- Serve the same meal as the rest of the family, not a separate meal for your child.
- Serve new foods in small amounts along with a familiar food.
- Allow your child to serve and feed him or herself.

**Research shows “picky” eating behaviour will end on its own as long as there is no pressure, no bribes and not too many rules about eating.**

# Meal and Snack Ideas

Children can eat what other family members eat. If you eat a variety of healthy foods, chances are your child will too.



## Meal ideas:

- Pancakes, French toast, hot/cold cereals topped with fresh or frozen fruit and yogurt
- Eggs – scrambled or omelet with fresh or frozen vegetables served with toast or wrapped in a tortilla
- Soups – lentil vegetable, chicken and rice, or beef and barley served with crackers
- Casseroles – tuna, turkey or macaroni and cheese mixed with frozen vegetables
- Sandwiches – like salmon salad, peanut butter, or egg salad in a tortilla, pita, or between slices of whole wheat bread
- Stir-fry – tofu, pork, or chicken with fresh vegetables like peppers, carrots, and zucchini served over rice, quinoa or noodles
- Burritos – mashed kidney beans or cooked ground turkey with tomatoes and cheese
- Salad – salad topped with chickpeas, cooked chicken or canned fish

## Snack ideas:

Snacks help children re-fuel between meals. Offer your child two to three snacks each day.

- Cheese cubes and whole grain crackers
- Cut up vegetables (red peppers, carrots, cucumbers and celery) and hummus
- Fruit (banana, mango, pear, berries or pineapple) and yogurt
- Oatmeal with milk and fruit
- Sardines on toast
- Muffins (made with bran, oatmeal, pumpkin or apple) and milk
- Bannock and peanut butter



**Did You Know...** Eating sticky, sweet foods and beverages, without proper teeth brushing can cause tooth decay.



# Choking

Children under 4 years of age are at higher risk for choking because they are still learning how to chew and swallow their food. Choking happens when unchewed food gets stuck in a child's airway.

## To reduce the risk of choking:

- Supervise meals and snacks.
- Have children seated and calm while eating or drinking.
- When travelling in a vehicle, avoid giving food to young children.
- Provide easy to eat foods:
  - Cut foods into bite-size pieces if needed.
  - Cut wieners or sausages lengthwise into 4 strips and then into bite-size pieces.
  - Spread peanut butter/nut butters thinly on a piece of warm toast.
  - Cut round fruit like grapes, large blueberries, cherries and strawberries in two or four pieces.



**Did You Know...** Young children are more likely to choke on small, round, hard foods with slippery surfaces. For children under age 4, examples of foods to avoid are hard candies, marshmallows, nuts, popcorn, whole grapes, ice cubes and dime-sized crackers.

If your child is choking, call 911.

# Food Allergy or Food Intolerance

**Food allergy:** The body's immune system can react to a certain food, even if a small amount of that food is eaten. Most reactions will appear within minutes of eating the food and almost all reactions happen within an hour.

Reactions can range from mild (hives, itchy mouth, diarrhea) to severe (swelling of the face, trouble breathing). Anaphylaxis is a severe reaction that can be life threatening .

**Call 911 if your child is having trouble breathing.**

If your child has had a reaction to food, talk to your health care provider.

For more information on food allergies visit the Health Canada website and search food allergies.



**Food intolerance:** Intolerance is different from a food allergy. It is not caused by an immune system reaction. An intolerance will cause discomfort (an upset stomach, gas or diarrhea) after eating a certain food, but it is not life threatening.

Before making changes to your child's diet, record symptoms and speak with a registered dietitian or health care professional.

# Constipation

**Bowel movements (pooping) can vary from child to child. Some children have a bowel movement more than once a day, while others may not have one for a few days.**

Constipation does NOT refer to the number of bowel movements, but rather to poop that is hard, small, dry and often darker in colour.



Some redness in the face, pain and straining while trying to poop are common and are NOT symptoms of being constipated.

## Ideas to prevent constipation:

- Offer vegetables and fruit regularly.
- Choose whole grains and foods made from whole grains.
- Serve cooked beans, peas and lentils often.
- Offer beverages like water and milk often.
- Encourage physical activity.
- Establish a bathroom routine.

**Did You Know...** Foods like bananas and cheese do not cause constipation.

**Prunes or prune juice are commonly given to manage constipation. Offer a small amount, 15-30 ml (1-2 Tbsp) of prune juice or cooked prunes and see if it helps your child poop.**

**If your child's bowel movements are an ongoing concern, talk to your health care provider.**



# Children in the Kitchen

**Cooking with children at any age may be messy but it will get them interested in food.**

By helping in the kitchen, your child will learn food preparation skills. Counting and measuring ingredients will also develop math skills.

If your child helps in the kitchen now, he or she will likely keep this good habit in years to come.



## Kitchen task ideas:

- Wash vegetables and fruit.
- Wash or dry dishes.
- Help set or wipe the table.
- Find ingredients in the cupboard.
- Roll cookie dough, meatballs or meat patties.
- Mash food with a fork or potato masher.
- Add, pour and measure liquids.
- Rip lettuce, shell peas and peel cooked eggs or corn husks.
- Mix ingredients with clean hands, wooden spoons or whisks.
- Make a basic recipe with some help.

**Supervise all food preparation activities. Consider your child's age, strength, size and ability before suggesting a kitchen task.**

# Food Safety

Young children have a higher risk of getting food poisoning than older children and adults. Their immune systems are still developing so they are less able to fight bacteria.

## Basic tips to lower the risk of food poisoning for you and your family:

- Wash hands before making, serving or eating food.
- Use clean surfaces and equipment when making and serving food.
- Keep raw meat, poultry, fish and eggs away from foods that are ready to eat, such as fresh vegetables and fruit. This should be done at all times – in the grocery cart, shopping bags, fridge, and on the counter or plate.
- Cook or reheat food to safe temperatures. If you can, use a meat thermometer to check the temperature.
- Avoid serving raw fish (ex: sushi or sashimi), undercooked meat, raw egg (ex: cookie dough or batters) or lightly cooked eggs or raw bean sprouts.
- Offer milk, milk products and juice or ciders that are pasteurized.
- Refrigerate or freeze leftovers and foods that can spoil within 2 hours.
- Eat leftovers within three days for best quality or freeze them.



**You can't tell by looking or smelling whether bacteria are present or have started growing. For leftover storage times and more information go to: [BeFoodSafe.ca](http://BeFoodSafe.ca).**

# Food, Food Everywhere...

**Food is everywhere – at playgroups, sporting events, celebrations, in stores, on TV and in advertising. Everyone has an opinion or view about food.**

Providing food is a balancing act. It is about providing variety and moderation and not about food rules.

## Ideas to help make all food enjoyable and part of a healthy diet:

- Avoid labeling a food as “bad” or forbidding it. This can make your child want it more.
- Labeling foods as healthier or “good for you” won’t make them more appealing.
- Maintain structure around regular meals and snacks.
- Trust your child to eat as much or as little as they need.
- Focus on the occasion not on the food.
- Be a good role model by making wise food choices yourself.



**Children learn to eat healthy foods over time.**



# Resources

If you have questions about feeding your child healthy and nutritious foods, contact:

- Your child's doctor or a health practitioner
- Your community health office
- A registered dietitian or public health nutritionist
- A registered nurse

To speak to a registered dietitian for free, call:

**Dial-a-Dietitian**

**204-788-8248 (in Winnipeg)**

**1-877-830-2892 (toll free outside Winnipeg)**

This resource is based on current scientific evidence acquired through organizations supporting healthy eating, such as Health Canada and Dietitians of Canada. It is also based on local cultural influences and best practice guidelines from Manitoba government departments and the provincial health regions, Dairy Farmers of Manitoba, and the expertise of the professionals in the working group. The recommendations are not only based in research, but are also practical and realistic.

## Websites

Allergy/Asthma Information Association - **aaia.ca**

Canadian Pediatric Society - **caringforkids.cps.ca**

Dairy Farmers of Manitoba - **milk.mb.ca**

Dietitians of Canada - **dietitians.ca/Your-Health/Nutrition-A-Z.aspx**

Ellyn Satter Institute - **ellynsatterinstitute.org**

Health Canada - **hc-sc.gc.ca** (search children, healthy eating, label reading)

Heart and Stroke Foundation - **heartandstroke.mb.ca** (search healthy kids)

Manitoba government - **manitoba.ca** (search child nutrition)

Manitoba Parent Zone - **manitobaparentzone.ca**

NutriStep Nutrition Screening Tool - **nutristep.ca**

Winnipeg Regional Health Authority - Healthy Smile Happy Child -

**wrha.mb.ca/healthinfo/preventill/oral\_child.php**

Winnipeg Regional Health Authority - **wrha.mb.ca** (search child nutrition)

## Books

*Secrets to Feeding a Healthy Family* by Ellyn Satter (2008)

*Fearless Feeding: How to Raise Healthy Eaters from High Chair to High School* by Jill Castle and Maryann Jacobsen (2013)

## Videos

*Raising Our Healthy Kids* – This series from Alberta Health Services focuses on healthy eating and the feeding relationship, with additional topics on positive parenting and active play. Available at: <https://vimeo.com/raisingourhealthykids/videos>

## Get copies of this resource

Download and print the pdf available at [manitoba.ca](http://manitoba.ca) (search feeding your child age 1 to 5).

Request printed copies by completing *The Health Information Resources Order Form* on the Manitoba Health website at: [manitoba.ca/health/jmc](http://manitoba.ca/health/jmc).



**A special thank-you to the Manitoba parents  
who provided photos of their children.**

# For more information

**For questions about feeding your child healthy  
and nutritious foods:**

Dial-a-Dietitian

204-788-8248 (in Winnipeg)

1-877-830-2892 (toll free outside Winnipeg)

**For more resources on parenting:**

1-877-945-4777

[www.manitobaparentzone.ca](http://www.manitobaparentzone.ca)



Winnipeg Regional  
Health Authority  
Office régional de la  
santé de Winnipeg



**Dial-a-Dietitian**