



Extension

UNIVERSITY OF WISCONSIN-MADISON

Parenting the  
Preschooler



# Healthy Eating

## *Tips for Feeding Preschoolers*

- Start with small portions and allow them to have more if still hungry.
- Make mealtime fun by cutting food with a cookie cutter or serving food in a funny serving dish.
- Ask the child to pick out a vegetable they would like to try.
- Include healthy beverages such as water and low-fat milk.
- Model eating a variety of foods and enjoying mealtime.
- Schedule meals and snacks, using healthy snacks to bridge the time between meals.
- Limit foods with little nutritional value such as soda, potato chips, or pre-packaged prepared snacks.
- Serve foods on small size plates or bowls and use smaller eating utensils.
- Use positive words and attention to reward children rather than candy or treats.

## *Why is a Balanced Diet Important?*

A balanced diet is like filling your car with the right gas. We want to put the right fuel in children's smaller stomachs. Offer variety and choices.



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## ***Help Children be Healthy Eaters***

Children's appetites vary daily. Do not panic if a child eats a little one day and a lot another day. Let the child decide how much to eat. Use MyPlate for preschoolers as a guide to the amount of food.



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## ***Help Preschoolers Make Wise Food Choices***

- Encourage children to taste new foods, but do not bribe them to get them to eat certain foods, or insist they eat everything on their plate. This will lead to power struggles and make meals a battle ground instead of a relaxing, family time.
- Children who help prepare foods are more willing to taste new foods. Make fun foods together like an English muffin pizza, frozen banana on a stick, or frozen graham cracker sandwiches.
- It is best to stay calm and neutral when eating. As long as there is a variety of foods offered at scheduled times allow children to decide how much they want to eat.
- Try new foods yourself as children often copy what adults do. Describe the food such as “This is a kiwi, which is sweet like a strawberry.” Or “This is a radish. It is hard and crunchy.”

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