







A Guide to Your Food Groups

This is a guide for the daily amounts your child should eat from each food group. Use the examples below to help your child meet their daily needs.

- Aim for the daily needs by spreading amounts between meals and snacks.
- Try to include a food from each group in every meal.

| | | |
|---|--|---|
| Grains | | |
| Aim for _____ ounces each day | | |
| <p>What counts as an ounce of grains?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 1 slice of bread • ½ cup of cooked pasta, rice or cereal • 1 – 6 inch tortilla • ½ an English muffin | <p>Portioning it out</p> <p>An adult's fist is about 1 cup. Use your child's hand to measure an age appropriate amount of grains for a single meal or snack.</p> |  |
| Fruits | | |
| Aim for _____ cups each day | | |
| <p>What counts as a cup of fruit?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 1 cup raw or cooked fruit • ½ cup dried fruit • 100% fruit juice (amount depends on child's age) | <p>Portioning it out</p> <p>A tennis ball is about ½ a cup of fruit.</p> <p>Age specific guidelines:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 4 ounces per day for 2-3 year olds • 4-6 ounces per day for 4-8 year olds • 8-12 ounces per day for 8-18 year olds |  |
| Vegetables | | |
| Aim for _____ cups each day | | |
| <p>What counts as a cup of vegetables?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 1 cup raw or cooked vegetables • 2 cups leafy salad greens • 1 cup 100% vegetable juice | <p>Portioning it out</p> <p>A tennis ball is about ½ a cup of vegetables. Use this as a guide to include vegetables in meals and snacks throughout the day.</p> |  |
| Dairy | | |
| Aim for _____ cups each day | | |
| <p>What counts as a cup of dairy?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 1 cup of milk or fortified soymilk • 1 cup low-fat or fat-free yogurt • 1.5 ounces of natural reduced-fat cheese | <p>Portioning it out</p> <p>An adult's thumb is about 1 ounce of cheese. Use your child's thumb to measure an age-appropriate amount of cheese for a single meal or snack.</p> |  |
| Protein | | |
| Aim for _____ ounces each day | | |
| <p>What counts as an ounce of protein foods?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 1 ounce of lean meat, poultry or seafood • 1 tablespoon of peanut butter • ½ ounce of nuts or seeds • ¼ cup cooked beans or peas | <p>Portioning it out</p> <p>An adult's palm is about 3 ounces of meat. Use your child's palm to measure an age-appropriate amount of meat for a single meal or snack.</p> |  |
| Oils | | |
| Aim for _____ teaspoons each day | | |
| <p>What counts as a teaspoon of oil?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 1 tsp. of vegetable oil • 2 tsp. of margarine • 2 Tbsp. of salad dressing | <p>Portioning it out</p> <p>An adult's thumb tip is about 1 tsp. of oil. Use your child's thumb tip to measure an age-appropriate amount of oil for a single meal or snack.</p> |  |



The information on this handout and much more can be found at the USDA's website, ChooseMyPlate.gov.

Grains

Tips

- Make half your grains whole grains.
- Choose whole grains that are good sources of dietary fiber.
- Eat fewer refined grains.

Put the tips into action

- Check the labels – the first ingredient should be a grain with “whole” in its name.
- Eat whole grains with at least 10-19% of the Daily Value per serving.
- Limit refined grains like cookies, cakes, pastries and donuts.

Fruits

Tips

- Vary your fruits throughout the day.

Put the tips into action

- Select fresh, frozen, canned, and dried fruit more often than juice.
- Choose fruits canned with 100% juice or unsweetened options.
- Choose 100% fruit juice when choosing juice.
- Use fruit as snacks, salads, or desserts.

Vegetables

Tips

- Choose different colored vegetables for your meals and snacks.

Put the tips into action

- Fresh, frozen, and canned vegetables all count.
- Choose low or reduced sodium or no salt added canned options.
- Add dark-green, red, and orange vegetables to main and side dishes.

Dairy

Tips

- Choose low-fat or fat-free dairy options.

Put the tips into action

- Switch to fat-free (skim) or low-fat (1%) milk – these have less calories but the same amount of Calcium and other nutrients.
- Choose milk or yogurt more often than cheese.
- Select low-fat or reduced-fat cheeses.

Protein

Tips

- Aim for a variety of lean protein foods.

Put the tips into action

- Vary sources – have seafood, meat, poultry, and plant sources.
- Choose extra lean (at least 90% lean) ground beef.
- Try seafood (fish and shellfish) at least twice a week.
- Remove the fat – trim and/or drain fat or remove the skin.

Oils

Tips

- Choose and use healthy oils in small amounts.

Put the tips into action

- Use vegetable oils (like olive, corn, canola).
- Limit solid fats and try to replace them with oils.
- Choose options with zero trans fats.