Feeding Advice

• All foods fit in a healthy diet. There are no “bad” foods.
• Offer a variety of colorful foods and textures at mealtime. A focus on whole grains is important.
• Avoid asking if your child likes or dislikes food; instead describe the food. Is it bitter, sweet, or crunchy?
• Help your child learn which foods are in each category. Serve food from each food group throughout the day.
• Explain how food fuels your child’s body for play. Proteins build muscles, grains fuel our brain, and fats give us energy.
• Serve your child the same food as the family. Try to have one food they prefer at every meal.
• Use the 5 senses to describe how food tastes, sounds, smells, feels, and looks.
• Trust your child’s appetite for hunger and fullness.
• Focus on family meals and conversation.
• Avoid screens at the table.
• If your child is in child care or with relatives, make sure you know what they are eating and drinking. Maintain healthy eating plans.

Caregiver Tips

• Encourage breakfast at home or school every day.
• Plan ahead for school lunch and travel. Let your child help make decisions about what they want to eat.
• Pairing a cheese stick with the afterschool cookie makes the snack more nutritious.
• Give foods flavor! Let your child dip veggies in ranch or fruit in yogurt.
• Putting new foods with favorite foods improves your child’s willingness to try new things.
• Be creative! A family meal can be on a blanket in the park.

What should my child drink?

• Milk with meals.
• Water in between; carry a water bottle to school.
• Limit drinks with added sugar.

Be Active

• Encourage 1 hour a day of play for the whole family.
• Try a family bike ride, dance party, or walk after dinner.
• Enjoy a game of catch, hopscotch, or hide and seek.
• Limit screen time to 1-2 hours per day for non-school activities.

Sleep Advice

• Enjoy a calm sleep routine with low lights, a warm bath, and shared reading time.
• Avoid screens before bedtime.
• At this age, children should sleep 11-13 hours per night.
Young children learn how to throw, catch and kick only by practice. Keep a basket of inside and outside play things like different balls, bats, hoops, bean bags, and fleece balls for quick games during the day.

**Have You Noticed?**
- Your child can skip now. Their body is getting stronger and they like to test it.
- They start to imitate older children in food choices and activities.

**Watching Your Child**
- When excited, your child will talk and move their whole body. But if they are not busy, they often watch TV. Keep them busy with lots of different activities. Don’t let them sit.
- Your preschooler will start to tell jokes. Laugh with them and tell them a joke, too.

**Fun at Mealtime**
- Together, plan a dinner every week, using foods from all five food groups.
- Your child will love to talk about the things they learn. Family meals are a great time to chat with no distractions.

**Try This!**
Have a neighborhood sports night. Play kickball, tee-ball, soccer or basketball with adults and kids.

**What Comes Next?**
You have started your child on the road to an active and healthy life. As your child goes to school, they will practice making healthy decisions for their bodies. Let their decisions start conversations about how the body feels when it is healthy and strong.

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**Play with a Purpose:**

- **Block out some active play time together each day.** Your child learns about the world through play. You learn about your child when you play together.
- **Let your child make the rules.** A bucket can be an instrument or a kite might be a dragon. Avoid your own distractions and play with your child.
- **Talk** – When you play, ask questions and spend time listening to your child. Practice conversation.
- **Develop big muscles** – Learn the names of body parts and what they do. Teach your child their heart is a muscle and needs to work. You know it’s working when it beats fast. Show your child how to feel the heart beat on their neck or wrist. Play games to get them moving and see what happens with the heart.
- **Develop small muscles** – Offer craft materials to make something new (hat, birdhouse, boat). Try dominoes, card or board games, write letters and numbers with fun items (chalk, finger paint, play dough).

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