

Little Tummys and Big Appetites: Nutrition and the 3 to 4 Year Old Child



Grains: Offer the preschool child about five ounces of grains each day. One cup of cereal; ½ cup cooked rice, pasta and oatmeal; one slice of bread or one

six-inch tortilla equals one ounce from the Grains food group. Two to three ounces of grain food should be made from whole grain. Examples of whole grains include whole grain breakfast cereal, whole wheat bread, brown rice and some corn tortillas. Grains provide B vitamins; whole grains provide dietary fiber.

Vegetables: Offer children the opportunity to select from a wide variety of vegetables everyday. Offer a total of 1 ½ cups of vegetables each day.

Vegetables offered throughout the week should include orange vegetables; beans, peas and lentils; starchy vegetables such as corn, peas and potatoes; dark green vegetables; and other vegetables such as tomatoes, cucumbers and mushrooms.



Fruits: The American Academy of Pediatrics recommend limiting juice to six ounces or ¾ cup each day. Juice should not displace other beverages such as milk and water. Children should be served a total of about 1 ½ cups of fruit each

day. A medium apple, orange or banana counts as one cup. For dried fruit, ½ cup equals one cup from the fruit group.

Milk: Children under the age of eight years need the equivalent of two cups of milk per day. Milk choices can include milk, yogurt, cheese, frozen ice milk dessert and calcium fortified soy milk. Two ounces of cheese, about the size of three dominos, count as one cup from the milk group. Children who cannot, or choose not, to drink milk can have calcium-fortified soy milk. A child who is three or four years of age should be drinking 2% or 1% milk.

Meat & Beans: Young children need to be offered about four ounces of food from the Meat & Beans food group each day. For example, a piece of meat or chicken the size of a deck of cards equals three ounces. One ounce equals one egg, one tablespoon of peanut butter, or ½ ounce of seeds or nuts.

Oils: Serve foods rich in healthful oils such as fish, nuts and seeds as well as cooking oils such as canola, olive, corn and sunflower. Limit foods containing solid fats such as butter, stick margarine and full fat dairy products. Often, children enjoy dipping vegetables into salad dressing. Products that are limited in saturated and trans fats are good choices.

