

# ABCs OF Growing Healthy KIDS:



## *"Breakfast is the most important meal of the day."*

Your mother always told you that breakfast was the most important meal of the day and believe it or not, research shows she was right! Studies have shown that when children have breakfast, they are more alert and participate more fully in the day's activities.

Breakfast is a very simple meal and does not have to be time consuming or costly to prepare. To make breakfast easy, use the guidance from ChooseMyPlate:

Eat foods from the grain group (bread, cereal, rice, or pasta), selecting whole grains when possible. Make sure to have a source of protein (cheese, meat, egg, peanut butter) and include fresh fruit or vegetables. If fruit juice is offered, it should be 100% juice and limited to 4-6 ounces per day.

Fresh fruit or a glass of fruit juice (no more than 4 ounces per day) is a healthy "fast food."

Children need 2 to 3 cups of milk every day. Breakfast is a good time to drink milk or have other dairy products such as yogurt and cheese.

*Notes:*

*Between the ages of 1 and 2, whole fat dairy foods should be served. After the age of 2, lower-fat versions of dairy products are recommended.*

*There are many alternatives available to peanut butter, including almond, cashew, soy, and sunflower seed butters. Feel free to use these as substitutes for peanut butter.*

### **FOR A GREAT BREAKFAST, TRY PUTTING A FEW OF THESE FOODS TOGETHER:**

- Cereal with 1% milk or nonfat milk
- Whole wheat bread, English muffins, pita bread, or bagels
- Peanut butter on whole wheat bread or crackers
- Eggs
- 100% fruit juice
- Fresh fruit
- Low-fat cottage cheese or ricotta cheese
- Low-fat yogurt with fresh fruit

### **BREAK AWAY FROM TRADITIONAL "BREAKFAST" FOODS.**

Many foods can be included in a nutritious breakfast. Try some of the following with a glass of milk for a quick, nutritious breakfast:

- Turkey or chicken sandwich with fruit
- Spaghetti with tomato sauce
- Peanut butter and jelly on whole wheat toast
- Cornbread with applesauce
- Tuna on toast and fruit
- Grilled cheese and fruit
- Macaroni and cheese with fruit
- Egg sandwich and fruit
- Low-fat yogurt with fruit or granola
- Low-fat cottage cheese with fruit
- Celery stuffed with peanut butter
- Frozen waffles, pancakes, or French toast with applesauce topping
- Try different breads such as bagels, low-fat muffins, English muffins, pita bread, whole wheat bread, or rolls.
- Use a variety of fruits in season: grapes, bananas, apples, kiwi, berries, grapefruits, oranges, tangerines, or melons.

# BRIGHTEN UP WITH BREAKFAST





## FAMILY-TIME OPPORTUNITY

Busy parents or caregivers who are looking for ways to regain control of their family life can claim breakfast as a time to be together with their children.

Breakfast is a great time for families to check schedules, share words of advice, or discuss an upcoming event. A good breakfast will get everyone in the family started off on the right foot for the day.

For additional information on ChooseMyPlate for preschoolers, go to [www.choosemyplate.gov/kids](http://www.choosemyplate.gov/kids).

## CHANGES, CHOICES, AND ROUTINES TO MAKE BREAKFAST RUN SMOOTHLY

- Get clothes ready the night before.
- Allow time for breakfast—wake up ten minutes earlier!
- Sit down together at the table.
- Keep the menu simple, but provide enough choices to please everyone's taste.
- Avoid controversial table conversation—promote the positive.

## Try these recipes for breakfast alternatives children will love:

### BREAKFAST PIZZA

- 1 whole regular or 2 mini pitas
- 4 Tablespoons low-fat ricotta or cottage cheese\*
- 1 small apple
- 1 medium banana
- 2 teaspoons sugar
- ¼ teaspoon cinnamon
- 2 Tablespoons raisins (optional)

\* 4 Tablespoons peanut butter can be substituted for the ricotta or cottage cheese. Leave out the sugar and cinnamon. Follow the same directions.

Preheat oven to 400°F. Slice pita bread through the middle to make rounds. Spread 2 tablespoons ricotta or cottage cheese on each half of the pita bread. Thinly slice the apple and the banana. Place 1/2 the sliced apple and 1/2 the sliced banana on each piece of the pita. Sprinkle 1/2 teaspoon of sugar and 1/8 teaspoon of cinnamon on each pita. Place both pita halves on a baking sheet and bake in the oven for 10 to 12 minutes.

### MAKES 2 SERVINGS.

*Provides 269 calories, 8 grams protein, 7 grams fiber, and 7 grams fat.*



### CINNAMON ORANGE BRAN MUFFIN

- 2 cups bran flakes cereal
- 1 cup orange juice
- 1 egg, beaten
- 3 Tablespoons vegetable oil
- 1 cup all-purpose flour
- ½ cup packed brown sugar
- 2 teaspoons baking powder
- 1-½ teaspoons ground cinnamon
- ½ teaspoon baking soda
- ½ cup raisins
- 12 muffin cups

Preheat oven to 400°F. In a large bowl, mix together orange juice, egg, and oil. In a separate bowl, mix together brown sugar, baking powder, cinnamon, and baking soda. Mix wet and dry ingredients. Stir in raisins. Divide mixture evenly among greased muffin tin, or in muffins cups. Bake 15 to 20 minutes or until toothpick inserted in center comes out clean.

### MAKES 12 MUFFINS.

*One serving provides 155 calories, 3 grams protein, 29 grams carbohydrate, 2 grams fiber, and 3 grams fat.*

### FRUIT SMOOTHIE

- 2 cups of any 100% juice
- 5 to 6 ice cubes, crushed
- 1 teaspoon vanilla extract
- ⅔ cup nonfat dry milk powder

Crush the ice in a blender. Add juice, vanilla, and milk powder to the ice in the blender or other container with a lid. Shake or blend well. Pour into glasses and serve right away.

### MAKES 4 SERVINGS.

*One serving provides 99 calories, and 5 grams protein.*





## PINT-SIZE BANANA RAISIN PANCAKES

- 2 very ripe, medium bananas, peeled
- 1 egg
- $\frac{3}{4}$  cup low-fat milk
- 1 Tablespoon vegetable oil
- 1 cup pancake and waffle mix
- $\frac{1}{4}$  cup raisins
- $\frac{1}{8}$  teaspoon ground cinnamon
- 1 recipe Warm Tropical Fruit Topping

Break up bananas into a mixing bowl. With back of fork, mash until smooth (about 1 cup). Add egg, milk, and oil; mix together.

In another mixing bowl, mix pancake mix, raisins, and cinnamon. Add pancake mix to banana mixture and stir until moistened. Heat skillet over a medium-high heat. Measure  $\frac{1}{4}$  cup batter and pour into skillet. Cook as many pancakes at one time as you can. Brown the underside of the pancake and when bubbles appear on the surface, carefully flip pancake over and continue cooking for another minute. Slide pancakes onto a platter while you continue cooking the remaining batter. Spoon Warm Tropical Fruit Topping over hot pancakes.

### MAKES 4 SERVINGS.

*One serving provides 305 calories, 7 grams protein, 2 grams fiber, and 6 grams fat.*

## WARM TROPICAL FRUIT TOPPING

- 1 can (8-ounce) pineapple chunks in juice
- 2 cans (6-ounces each) pineapple-orange banana juice
- 1 Tablespoon cornstarch
- 1 firm, medium banana, peeled and sliced
- 1 orange, peeled and sliced
- 1 cup seedless grapes

Drain juice from pineapple into small saucepan. Stir in pineapple-orange banana juice and cornstarch, blend until smooth. Bring mixture to a boil over medium-high heat, and cook for 3 minutes, stirring constantly. Turn heat off and carefully move saucepan to a cool burner.

Mix together pineapple, banana, orange, and grapes in a mixing bowl. When mixture cools to room temperature, about 15 minutes, stir fruit into cooked mixture. Spoon over pancakes.



## FRITTATA

- 1 egg
- $\frac{3}{4}$  cup flour
- $\frac{1}{2}$  teaspoon salt
- $\frac{1}{4}$  teaspoon dried oregano
- 1 cup 2% milk
- 1 cup grated mozzarella cheese
- 3 Tablespoon grated Parmesan cheese

Mix egg, flour, salt oregano, and milk. Pour into a blender and blend until foamy. Add mozzarella cheese and pour into greased pie pan. Bake 400°F for 30 minutes. Top with Parmesan cheese. Boil until Parmesan is slightly melted. Serve warm or cold.

### MAKES 6 SERVINGS.

*One serving provides 157 calories, 10 grams protein, and 5 grams fat.*



## GRANOLA BARS

- 1- $\frac{1}{2}$  cups granola cereal
- $\frac{3}{4}$  cup flour
- 1 teaspoon baking powder
- $\frac{1}{4}$  teaspoon salt
- $\frac{1}{2}$  cup honey
- 1 banana, mashed
- $\frac{1}{2}$  cup margarine, melted
- 1 egg
- 1 teaspoon vanilla extract

Set aside  $\frac{1}{2}$  cup of the cereal. Mix the remaining ingredients in a bowl. Spread mixture into a greased 11"x7" baking dish. Crush reserved cereal and sprinkle over the batter. Bake at 350°F for 25 minutes. Cool for a few minutes and cut into squares.

### MAKES 12 SERVINGS.

*One serving provides 187 calories, 2 grams protein, 1 gram fiber and 9 grams fat.*





## BREAKFAST BARS

- 6 Tablespoons margarine
- 3 cups miniature marshmallows
- ½ cup peanut butter
- ½ cup nonfat dry milk
- ¼ teaspoon cinnamon
- 1 cup raisins
- 4 cups oat o's cereal

Spray a 9" x 9" x 2" square pan with nonstick cooking spray. In a large saucepan, melt margarine and marshmallows over low heat, stirring constantly. Stir in peanut butter until melted.

Remove from heat and stir in milk and cinnamon. Fold in raisins and cereal, stirring until evenly coated. With buttered hands, pat into pan. Cool thoroughly and cut into squares.

### MAKES 12 SERVINGS:

*One serving provides 229 calories, 5 grams protein, 2 grams fiber, and 11 grams fat.*

### CAUTION:

Be aware of choking risks and food allergies when preparing and serving meals and snacks. Think about the size, shape, and consistency when choosing foods due to the potential choking risks in children. Food cut in large chunks, small hard foods, and soft and sticky foods should be avoided. The top choking hazards for children include: hotdogs, meats, sausages, fish with bones, spoonfuls of peanut butter, popcorn, chips, pretzel nuggets, raisins, whole grapes, raw carrots, fruits and vegetables with skins, and marshmallows. Be sure that food is cut in small pieces (no larger than 1/2 inch), grated, or finely chopped. Be sure that children are closely supervised when they are eating.

Do not give honey to children under 12 months of age. Honey contains spores that can cause infant botulism.

Many children have food allergies or sensitivities to food. According to the American Academy of Pediatrics, 90% of children's food allergies are from milk, eggs, peanuts, tree nuts (pecan/walnuts), fish, shellfish, strawberries, soy, wheat, and gluten. Carefully read food labels for potential risks and be sure to ask the parents if children have a known allergy or sensitivity.

Dental health is a growing concern with young children, so it is important to keep in mind that starchy, sticky, and sugary foods can cause tooth decay. Children should brush their teeth after any meal or snack, but particularly when you serve these foods.

### References:

Choose My Plate, United States Dept. of Agriculture  
[www.choosemyplate.gov/kids](http://www.choosemyplate.gov/kids).

## SURPRISE MUFFINS

- 1-¼ cups flour
- 3 teaspoons baking powder
- 1 teaspoon salt
- ⅓ cup sugar
- 2 cups cornflake cereal
- 1 cup milk
- 1 egg
- ⅓ cup shortening
- ¼ cup preserves or jam

Mix together flour, baking powder, salt, and sugar. Set aside. Measure cornflake cereal into large mixing bowl. Stir in milk. Let stand 2 to 3 minutes

or until cereal is softened. Add egg and shortening to the cereal mixture. Beat well. Add flour mixture to the cereal mixture, stirring only until combined. Divide batter evenly into 12 greased 2 ½ -inch muffin pan cups. Make a deep indentation in top of batter for each muffin. Fill each with one measuring teaspoon of preserves. Bake at 400°F about 25 minutes or until golden brown.



### MAKES 12 SERVINGS.

*One serving provides 168 calories, 3 grams protein, and 6 grams fat.*

Originally prepared by Katherine Cason, associate professor of food science

Updated in 2014 by Jill Cox, MS, RD, program development specialist, Penn State Better Kid Care and Mary Alice Gettings, MS, RD, nutrition consultant with funding from the Penn State Extension Better Kid Care program.

Penn State College of Agricultural Sciences research and extension programs are funded in part by Pennsylvania counties, the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania, and the U.S. Department of Agriculture.

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CODE EE0119 09/14pod

# ABCs OF Growing Healthy KIDS:



## GOOD TIMES AT MEAL TIMES

*“ Please pass the love, unity, and spaghetti. ”*

An unlikely request? Perhaps. But in truth, that’s what you give your child when you sit down together at the family table.

This quote from Connie Evers, registered dietitian, in her article “Bringing Back Mealtime” (*Healthy Kids Magazine*, December ‘94 /January ‘95), emphasizes the importance of family mealtimes. Getting everyone together for a meal can seem like an impossible task. But the benefits of eating together make family mealtime a tradition worth pursuing.

### WHY EAT TOGETHER?

- **Nutrition.** Studies show most people eat more balanced meals and a wider variety of foods when they eat with family or friends. Shared meals also save money.
- **Tradition.** Food served at the family table helps to shape and give lasting meaning to your cultural heritage. Positive food memories created during childhood are cherished for life.
- **Family bond.** One strength of emotionally healthy families is spending time together. This includes eating meals together on a routine basis. Family meals offer a chance to communicate, helping to build a stronger bond and commitment to one another.

### MAKING THE MOST OF FAMILY MEALTIMES

Just sitting together at the table does not always lead to fascinating family conversations or warm mealtime memories. Here are some ideas for making the most of family mealtimes.

#### 1. Make family mealtimes a priority.

Emphasize the importance of mealtime together. If you’re like most families, you’re caught in a time crunch. Adults and youth all may hold jobs. There are sports, dance lessons, music lessons, homework, a house to clean, clothes to wash, perhaps an older parent or relative to care for, and many other obligations.





If you're not eating together as a family, make a decision about your family priorities—and consider dropping at least one thing so you can have more time for family meals.

## 2. Make mealtimes pleasant.

Children learn social skills from watching and listening to you. Share positive things that have happened during the day. Postpone negative conversation about behavior until another time. Use some preplanned questions to enhance family conversation, for example:

- Tell us something that happened recently making you feel really happy.
- Someone has given you \$1,000. You have to spend some of it on your family before you can buy anything for yourself. What would you buy for everyone?
- If you could spend an afternoon with a famous person (living or dead), who would you pick?

## 3. Serve a variety of healthy foods.

Use ChooseMyPlate and family preferences as a guide when planning meals. It is the parent's job to offer a variety of foods in a pleasant atmosphere; the child's job is to choose how much and whether or not to eat.

## 4. Keep meals simple and easy.

Save the elaborate menus for when you have time to prepare and enjoy them. Simple foods served with love and laughter will outshine gourmet goodies almost any time.

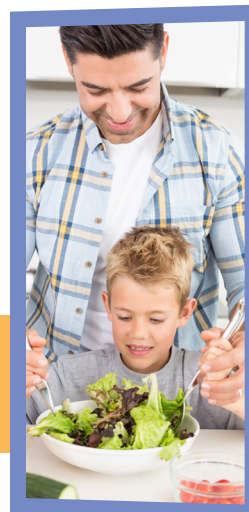
## 5. Eliminate interruptions and distractions.

Turn off the televisions, radios, computers, and all electronic devices. Use an answering machine or voice mail if it's hard to refrain from responding to a ringing phone while you are eating. It's OK to answer emergency calls, from an ill parent, for example.

## 6. Get everyone involved in meals.

Give each person a task, such as choosing the menu, setting the table, making a salad, or cleaning up. The skills your children learn include teamwork and cooperation.

Shared meals can be a time to take a deep breath, enjoy each other's company, strengthen relationships, and savor good food.



*Keep it simple  
Keep it fun  
Just keep it!*

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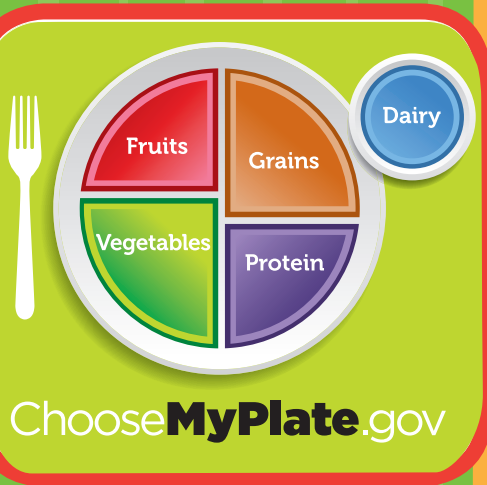
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# ABCs OF Growing Healthy KIDS:



## KEEP ON SNACKING



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### BE SNACK-WISE . . . USE THE *ChooseMyPlate* TO PLAN SNACKS

What's the first thing your children say when they come in the door? "I'm hungry. What's to eat?"

It can be hard for children to get all the nutrients and calories they need in three meals a day, especially if they are very active. Studies show many children do not get enough iron, vitamin A, or vitamin C. Good snacks can provide these and other vital nutrients. That's why nutritious snacks are good for growing children.

Snacks based on the ChooseMyPlate provide the biggest nutritional bang for your snack-time buck. Try these ideas for snacks at home or "on the go":

#### SNACKS FROM THE GRAIN GROUP

- Cracker stacks—wheat crackers spread with cheese spread
- Ready-to-eat cereals
- Flavored mini rice cakes or popcorn cakes
- Breads of all kinds, such as multigrain, rye, white, or wheat
- Ginger snaps or fig bars
- Popcorn
- Trail mix—ready-to-eat cereals mixed with raisins or other dried fruit
- Graham crackers

#### SNACKS FROM THE VEGETABLE GROUP

- Vegetable sticks, such as carrot, celery, green pepper, cucumber, or squash
- Celery stuffed with peanut butter
- Cherry tomatoes cut in small pieces
- Steamed broccoli, green beans, or sugarpeas with low-fat dip

#### SNACKS FROM THE FRUIT GROUP

- Apple ring sandwiches—peanut butter on apple rings
- Tangerine sections
- Chunks of banana or pineapple
- Canned fruits packed in juice
- Juice box (100% juice)

#### SNACKS FROM THE MILK GROUP

- Milkshakes made from fruit and milk
- Cheese slices with thin apple wedges
- String cheese or individually wrapped cheese slices
- Mini yogurt cups

#### SNACKS FROM THE MEAT GROUP

- Hard-cooked eggs (wedges or slices)
- Peanut butter spread thin on crackers
- Bean dip spread thin on crackers

Check out ten tips for healthy snacking at [www.choosemyplate.gov/food-groups/downloads/TenTips](http://www.choosemyplate.gov/food-groups/downloads/TenTips).

*Note: There are many alternatives available to peanut butter, including almond, cashew, soy, and sunflower seed butters. Feel free to use these as substitutes for peanut butter.*



## COOL KIDS EATS AND TREATS

Here are some snack foods which are simple to make:

**ANTS ON A LOG**—Fill celery sticks with peanut butter and top with raisins.

**BANANA SPLIT SALAD**—Slice bananas lengthwise. Top with a scoop of cottage cheese. Spoon fresh fruit or fruit cocktail over the top.

**BUNNY FOOD**—Combine grated carrots with raisins and a bit of honey. Serve on crackers.

**FANCY SANDWICHES**—Cut bread into shapes with cookie cutters. Spread with favorite toppings.

**MAKE-A-FACE SANDWICH**—Cut bread into a circle. Spread with peanut butter. Make “hair” and “eyes” with raisins, carrots, apple slices, or coconut.

**PARTY MIX**—Mix 1 cup dry cereal and 1/2 cup small pretzel sticks. Place on cookie sheet. Pour 2 tablespoons melted butter over the cereal and pretzels; then sprinkle with Parmesan cheese.

Bake at 250° F for 30 minutes, stirring occasionally.

**ROLL-UP SALAD**—Spread a leaf of lettuce or cabbage with peanut butter. Place a celery or carrot stick in the middle. Roll up the leaf with the carrot or celery in the center.

**TREASURE LOGS**—Lay a piece of cheese on a thin slice of meat. Roll into a log shape.

## MORE COOL TREATS!

### APPLE-RAISIN LADYBUG

- 2 lettuce leaves
- 1 medium red apple, quartered and cored
- 2 teaspoons creamy peanut butter
- 2 tablespoons raisins
- 5 red grapes

Place the lettuce leaves on two salad plates. To make one bug, arrange two apple quarters, peel side up, on a lettuce leaf. Put dabs of peanut butter in the space between the apple quarters and arrange raisins on the peanut butter. For the head, place one grape at the stem ends of the quarters.

For legs, cut each remaining grape lengthwise into four pieces; put three on each side of the ladybug. Place small dabs of peanut butter on the remaining raisins; gently press onto the apples for spots. Repeat the process for the second bug.



### BANANA BUG

- 1 small, not-too-ripe banana
- Pretzel sticks
- Creamy peanut butter
- Raisins

Poke the pretzel sticks into the banana for the legs and antennae. Use peanut butter to make eyes and to glue on a raisin spine. Makes one bug. This snack is fun to make with children.





## BANANA-APPLEPILLAR

- 1 lettuce leaf
- 1 medium banana, peeled
- ½ medium red or yellow apple, cored and cut into ¼-inch slices (a pear may be used in place of the apple)
- 2 raisins

Place the lettuce on a salad plate; top with the banana. Cut ¼-inch V-shaped slices halfway through the banana, spacing cuts 1 inch apart. Place a pear slice, peel side up, in each cut. For eyes, gently press raisins into one end of the banana. Serve immediately!

**MAKES ONE CATERPILLAR.**

## CHERRY TOMATO SPIDERS

- Cherry tomatoes
- Chow-mein noodles
- Peanut butter or cream cheese
- Raisins

Stick four chow-mein noodles on each side of the cherry tomato to serve as spider legs. Dab the raisins with peanut butter or cream cheese and stick to the cherry tomato to serve as eyes.

## ICE CREAM IN A BAG

- Pint-sized zipper-type bag
- 1 tablespoon sugar
- ½ teaspoon vanilla
- ½ cup milk
- Gallon-sized zipper-type bag
- 3 cups ice
- ⅓ cup salt

Put the sugar, vanilla, and milk in the pint-sized zipper bag. Close the bag, making sure it is sealed. Mix the ice and salt in the gallon-sized bag. Put the pint bag inside the gallon bag and close the large bag securely. Turn and roll the bag for approximately 6 minutes until you have a semisoft, delicious treat.



## LUNCH BOX PIZZAS

- 1 tube refrigerated buttermilk biscuits (10 biscuits)
- ¼ cup tomato sauce
- 1 teaspoon Italian seasoning or oregano
- 10 slices pepperoni
- ¾ cup shredded Monterey Jack cheese (or other favorite cheese)
- ¾ cup sliced or chopped vegetables (green peppers, cherry tomatoes, mushrooms, onions, broccoli)

Flatten each biscuit into a 3-inch circle and press into a greased muffin cup. Mix the tomato sauce and Italian seasoning; spoon 1 teaspoonful into each cup. Top each with a slice of pepperoni and 1 tablespoon of cheese. Bake at 425° F for 10–15 minutes, or until golden brown. Cool and package individually in plastic sandwich bags.

These are good cold in a lunch box or made for a snack. Include an ice pack or a box of frozen juice with the wrapped pizzas to keep them cold.

## PLANT PART ART

- 1 large flat cracker
- Peanut butter or cream cheese
- 2 or 3 broccoli florets
- 1 celery stick
- 1 lettuce leaf, torn into small pieces
- 1 tablespoon grated carrots

Lightly spread the cracker with the peanut butter or cream cheese. Arrange the shredded carrot for the roots, celery stick for the stem, lettuce for the leaves, and broccoli florets for the flowers.

## PUDDINGWICHES

- 1-½ cups cold milk
- 1 package (3.9 ounces) instant chocolate pudding mix
- ¼ to ½ cup peanut butter
- 15 whole graham crackers

In a mixing bowl, mix together the milk, pudding mix, and peanut butter. Beat on low speed for 2 minutes. Let stand for 5 minutes.

Break the graham crackers in half.

Spread the pudding mixture over half the crackers; top with the remaining crackers. Wrap and freeze until firm.

## FRUIT LEATHER

- 6-ounce package of dried fruits
- 1-¼ cups water
- ¼ cup sugar

In a medium saucepan, mix together all the ingredients. Bring to a boil; reduce heat. Cover and simmer about 15 minutes or until the fruit is very tender. Drain off any liquid.

Blend in a food processor. Line a 15 X 10 X 1 inch baking pan with foil. Spray with nonstick coating. Spread the fruit in a thin, even layer over the foil. Place in a 300° oven for 35 minutes. Without opening the door, turn off the oven and let the fruit dry overnight. Lift the foil and fruit leather off the pan.

Remove the leather from the foil. Roll up and wrap in waxed paper. Keeps in refrigerator for up to 3 months or in freezer for up to 6 months.

## HAPPY TRAIL MIX

- 2 cups honey graham cereal
- 1 cup tiny marshmallows
- 1 cup peanuts
- ½ cup semisweet chocolate or butterscotch pieces
- ½ cup raisins

Mix together all the ingredients. Store in a closed plastic bag or covered container.

**MAKES ABOUT 5 CUPS.**

## CAUTION:

Be aware of choking risks and food allergies when preparing and serving meals and snacks. Think about the size, shape, and consistency when choosing foods due to the potential choking risks in children. Food cut in large chunks, small hard foods, and soft and sticky foods should be avoided. The top choking hazards for children include: hot dogs, meats, sausages, fish with bones, spoonfuls of peanut butter, popcorn, chips, pretzel nuggets, raisins, whole grapes, raw carrots, fruits and vegetables with skins, and marshmallows. Be sure that food is cut in small pieces (no larger than 1/2 inch), grated, or finely chopped. Be sure that children are closely supervised when they are eating.

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## References:

Snacking Choose My Plate, United States Dept. of Agriculture  
[www.choosemyplate.gov/food-groups/downloads/TenTips/DGTipsheet24MyPlateSnackTipsforParents.pdf](http://www.choosemyplate.gov/food-groups/downloads/TenTips/DGTipsheet24MyPlateSnackTipsforParents.pdf).

## SHAKE PUDDING

- ½ cup cold milk
  - 3 tablespoons instant pudding
- Place ingredients in a small jar, leaving the jar half empty for shaking. Secure the lid. Shake for a few minutes. Your pudding is now ready to eat!

**ONE SMALL BOX OF PUDDING MAKES 4 SERVINGS.**

## FROZEN YOGURT POPS

- 2 cups yogurt
- 1 6-ounce can frozen fruit juice concentrate
- 2 teaspoons vanilla

Place ingredients in a large bowl and stir until well blended. Spoon into small paper cups. Insert a wooden ice cream spoon, plastic spoon, or popsicle stick, and freeze. (A small piece of foil wrapped around the top of the cup will hold the spoon in place.)

## PURPLE COW

- 2 cups vanilla ice cream, slightly softened
- 3 tablespoons frozen grape juice concentrate, thawed
- 1 cup milk

Put the grape juice concentrate and milk in a blender. Blend at low speed until smooth. Add the softened ice cream and blend at low speed. Serve immediately.

**SERVES 4.**

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CODE EE0122 09/14pod

# ABCs OF Growing Healthy KIDS:



## PICKY EATERS

### IS YOUR CHILD A PICKY EATER?

Does your child refuse green foods? Does he or she suddenly react to an all-time favorite food with “I don’t like this” or, simply, “No!”? Are you concerned because your child will not eat vegetables?

The preschool years are characterized by bouts of asserting independence. What appears to be “picky” eating may instead be your child’s early attempts to be assertive—a natural part of growing up. Before a picky eater gets to be a problem eater, you can use certain skills and techniques to ease mealtime struggles and encourage even the pickiest eater to try a few bites of new, different, nutritious food at each meal.

Many sources are available to help parents and caregivers cope with the young, opinionated eater, but no one answer will work all the time. Arm yourself with these tips for handling what may appear to be the “downs and ups” of child feeding.

### TRY ONE, TWO, OR A FEW OF THE FOLLOWING TIPS WITH A PICKY EATER YOU KNOW!

**1. ONE STEP AT A TIME.**

Offer just one new food at a time. Let the child know if it will be sweet, salty, or sour. Serve it with other foods you know your child likes.

**2. A TASTE IS JUST A TASTE.**

Let your child decide the amount to try. A “taste” can be as small as half a teaspoon but don't force it.

**3. WHAT GOES IN, MAY COME OUT... AND THAT'S OKAY!**

Recent studies indicate young children are more likely to try a new food if they have the option of not swallowing it. Show children how to carefully spit the food into a napkin, if they decide they don't want to swallow it.





#### 4. IF AT FIRST YOU DON'T SUCCEED... TRY AGAIN.

Many young children must be offered a food ten to fifteen times before they will accept it, according to recent research. Continue to offer a new food; don't give up. Eventually children are likely to give it a try.

#### 5. BE A ROLE MODEL.

Imitation is a powerful force in learning. If you want children to be willing to try new foods, it is helpful for them to see you eating those foods, too.

#### 6. CAPITALIZE ON "FOOD-TASTING" PEERS.

To encourage a reluctant taster, have him or her sit with friends or siblings who are good tasters when you introduce a new food.

#### 7. AVOID THE "SHORT-ORDER COOK" ROUTINE.

Serve an unfamiliar food with familiar ones. This increases the likelihood a child will taste the new food. But expect your child to eat the same foods as the rest of your family.

#### 8. COLOR AND TEXTURE MAKE A DIFFERENCE.

Most children prefer bright colors and interesting textures. Many prefer plain foods they can easily recognize.

#### 9. GET CHILDREN INVOLVED.

Even the most finicky eater is more likely to try a food he or she has helped prepare.

#### 10. REMEMBER MEAL PLANNING AND GROCERY SHOPPING.

Whenever possible, include your child in planning, shopping for, and preparing some meals. This sense of ownership may stimulate interest and curiosity, and could help "sell" that first bite.

#### 11. YOU CAN LEAD THEM TO A NEW FOOD... BUT YOU CAN'T MAKE THEM EAT.

Never force a child to try a food. Offer it, but if it is not eaten, simply take the food away and present it again at a different time.

#### 12. READ STORIES ABOUT FOOD TO AND WITH YOUR CHILDREN.

A child may be more likely to try a food that was introduced in a story.

#### 13. MOST OF ALL, RELAX!

Focus your attention on the positive aspects of your child's eating behavior, not on your child's food.

Originally prepared by Katherine Cason, associate professor of food science

Updated in 2014 by Jill Cox, MS, RD, program development specialist, Penn State Better Kid Care and Mary Alice Gettings, MS, RD, nutrition consultant with funding from the Penn State Extension Better Kid Care program.

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# ABCs OF Growing Healthy KIDS:



## BIRTH THROUGH 5 MONTHS

### MOUTH PATTERNS

- Suck/swallow reflex
- Tongue thrust reflex
- Gag reflex
- Rooting reflex

### HAND AND BODY SKILLS

- Poor control of head, neck, trunk
- Brings hands to mouth around 3 months

### FEEDING SKILLS OR ABILITIES

- Swallows liquids but pushes most solid objects from the mouth; unable to move solids from the front. At this age, they are not able to move solids from the front to the back of their tongue.

## 4 MONTHS THROUGH 6 MONTHS

### MOUTH PATTERNS

- Draws in upper or lower lip as spoon is removed from mouth
- Up and down chewing movement
- Can move food from front to back of tongue to swallow
- Tongue thrust and rooting reflexes begin to disappear
- Gag reflex diminishes
- Opens mouth when sees spoon approaching



### HAND AND BODY SKILLS

- Sits with support
- Good head control
- Uses whole hand to grasp objects

### FEEDING SKILLS OR ABILITIES

- Takes in a spoonful of pureed or strained food and swallows it without choking
- Drinks small amounts from a sippy cup when held by another person (spilling or leaking may occur)

## SEQUENCE OF DEVELOPMENT AND FEEDING SKILLS



# 5 MONTHS THROUGH 9 MONTHS

## MOUTH PATTERNS

- Begins to control the position of food in the mouth
- Up and down chewing movement
- Positions food between jaws/gums

## FEEDING SKILLS OR ABILITIES

- Begins to eat mashed foods
- Eats from a spoon easily
- Drinks from a sippy cup with some spilling
- Begins to feed self with hands

## HAND AND BODY SKILLS

- Begins to sit alone unsupported
- Follows food with eyes
- Begins to use thumb and index finger to pick up objects



# 8 MONTHS THROUGH 11 MONTHS



## MOUTH PATTERNS

- Moves food from side to side in mouth
- Begins to chew in rotary pattern (diagonal movement of the jaw as food is moved to the side or center of the mouth)

## FEEDING SKILLS OR ABILITIES

- Begins to eat ground or finely chopped food and small pieces of soft food
- Begins to experiment with spoon but prefers to feed self with hands
- Drinks from a sippy cup with less spilling

## HAND AND BODY SKILLS

- Sits alone easily
- Transfers objects from hand to mouth



## 10 MONTHS THROUGH 12 MONTHS

### MOUTH PATTERNS

- Rotary chewing (diagonal movement of the jaw as food is moved to the side or center of the mouth)

### FEEDING SKILLS OR ABILITIES

- Eats chopped food and small pieces of soft, cooked table food
- Begins spoon-feeding with help

### HAND AND BODY SKILLS

- Begins to put spoon in mouth
- Begins to hold sippy cup
- Good eye-hand-mouth coordination

*This is a sequence for normal, healthy, full-term infants.  
Developmental stages may vary with individual babies.*

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