

Three year olds are busy and have their own ideas about food and eating. They are becoming more independent and their growth is slowing down. They may not need as much food as you think. Trust their appetite. Children know how much they need to eat. Set limits and allow your child to help with decisions. They may be picky eaters or refuse to eat. This is very normal at this age. If they don't eat at one meal, they will eat at the next snack or meal.



Your Job and Your Child's Job

Sometimes it helps to remember what your job is and what your child's job is when it comes to eating.

- Your job is to give your child a variety of healthy foods at regular meal and snack times. Don't force your child to eat.
- If your child asks for food after refusing a meal, gently remind him it will be time for a sit down snack soon.
- Limit foods like candy, chips, and soft drinks.
- Your child's job is to decide what and how much to eat. Your child's appetite will change from day to day.

Helpful Hints

- Offer small servings.
- Cut meat in small pieces or mix it with other foods.
- Provide a good source of protein like eggs, beans, peanut butter, meat, or fish.
- Try fresh, frozen, or canned fruits and vegetables.
- Serve meals and snacks at the table to prevent choking.
- Provide a variety of healthy foods each day. Don't make separate meals for your picky child.
- Serve 1%, ½%, or skim milk with meals. If your child just wants to drink and not eat, give milk after the meal.
- Give your child water between meals and snacks when she is thirsty.
- Eat meals together and model healthy choices.

Portion sizes may vary with tummy size!
Serve your child this much to start:

Food	Daily Servings	Serving Sizes
Bread, Dry Cereal, Cereal, Rice, and Pasta	4-5	1 slice 1 cup ready-to-eat-flakes ½ cup Use more whole grain products.
Fruit	2-3	½ cup cooked; 1 cup fresh 4 ounces 100% juice
Vegetables	3	½ cup cooked; 1 cup fresh 4 ounces 100% juice
Meat, Poultry, Fish, Dried Beans, Eggs Peanut butter	3-4	1 ounce ¼ cup cooked beans 1 egg 1 tablespoon
Milk, Yogurt, and Cheese	4	4 ounces or ¾ ounce cheese

Wait until your toddler is four years old to give nuts, popcorn, and sticky foods.

My Lunch Plate



Department of
Health

Women, Infants, and
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