

Healthy Kids, Healthy Bodies (Age 2–18)

Do you want to learn how to support healthy eating, active living, and good sleep habits in your family? If you answered “yes” then read on for ideas.

Focus on healthy habits that promote overall well-being

Healthy habits will help your child to grow in a pattern that is right for them. Adopt healthy eating, active living, and good sleep habits for the whole family. Set up your home and your routines to make it easier to put healthy habits into daily life.

Fad diets or strict meal plans can affect a child’s growth, development, and relationship with food. Don’t put your child on a diet or exercise program without the advice of a healthcare provider.

Healthy eating habits for the whole family

- Serve the same healthy foods to the whole family.
- Children copy their parents. When you enjoy healthy foods, you teach your child to enjoy them as well.
- Eat together as a family as often as you can. This is a chance to try new foods and spend time together.
- Have regular meals and snacks rather than grazing. This helps children to get the nutrients they need and may allow for healthier food choices.
- Offer water or milk as drink choices.
- Encourage your child to follow their body’s hunger and fullness cues and learn to stop eating when they are comfortably full.
- Put aside books and toys, and turn off TV and other devices during meals. This helps children pay attention to their body’s cues.

- Pack healthy snacks, meals, and drinks rather than buying them while you are out. If you do eat out, be aware that portion sizes are often large. Share food or take home leftovers.
- Reward children with verbal praise, special activities, stickers or bubbles, instead of food.

Follow Canada’s Food Guide

Offer a variety of healthy foods from Canada’s Food Guide to satisfy your child’s hunger. Serve 3 balanced meals and 2–3 healthy snacks each day. Younger children need fewer servings of each food group than older children.

Use this as a guide for making food choices:



Choose most often foods are healthy daily choices from the 4 food groups.



Choose sometimes foods are also healthy choices, but may be lower in fibre, vitamins, minerals, and higher in sugar, fat, or salt.



Choose least often foods are low in nutrients as well as high in sugar, fat, and salt. Your child can eat these foods occasionally, but they shouldn’t take the place of healthy food.

Vegetables and Fruit

Children 2–3 years:

4 servings a day

Children 4–8 years:

5 servings a day

Youth 9–18 years:

6 to 8 servings a day



Examples of 1 serving:

- 1 medium piece of fresh fruit
- ½ cup (125 mL) fresh, frozen, or canned vegetables or fruit
- 1 cup (250 mL) leafy vegetables
- 60 mL (¼ cup) dried fruit

Choose bright orange and dark green vegetables and fruit more often.



- Fresh, frozen or canned vegetables without added salt
- Fresh or frozen fruit without added sugar
- Baked or boiled potatoes
- Fruit canned in juice
- Dried fruit or 100% dried fruit leather

- Fresh, frozen, or canned vegetables with added salt
- Canned or frozen fruit in light syrup
- Baked fruit or apple chips
- Dried fruit with added sugar
- Lower sodium salsa



- Battered and fried vegetables
- French fries, hash browns, or potato chips
- Sweetened fruit punch, beverage, or drink



Grain Products

Children 2–3 years:

3 servings a day

Children 4–8 years:

4 servings a day

Youth 9–18 years:

6 to 7 servings a day



Examples of 1 serving:

- ½ cup (125 mL) cooked pasta or rice
- ¾ cup (175 mL) hot cereal or 30 g cold cereal
- 3 cups (750 mL) popcorn
- 1 slice of bread

Choose whole grain products more often.



- Whole grain bannock, bread, injera, naan, noodles, pasta, pita, quinoa, rice, or wrap
- Whole grain hot or cold cereal
- Lower fat unsalted whole grain crackers
- Plain popcorn
- Small, lower fat whole grain muffins

- White bannock, bread, crackers, naan, noodles, pasta, pita, rice, or wrap
- Hot or cold cereal without whole grains
- Flavoured rice cakes
- Granola bars
- Light microwave popcorn
- Lower fat muffins or cookies



- Cake, croissants, doughnuts, or pie
- Cheese and garlic bread
- Chocolate dipped granola bars
- Fry bread
- Instant noodles or high fat noodle and sauce mixes
- Store-bought cookies or muffins
- Tortilla or nacho chips



Milk and Alternatives

Children 2–8 years:

2 servings a day

Youth 9–18 years:

3 to 4 servings a day



Examples of 1 serving:

- 1 cup (250 mL) milk or soy beverage
- $\frac{3}{4}$ cup (175 g) yogurt
- 1 $\frac{1}{2}$ oz (50 g) cheese

Note: M.F.= milk fat

Choose lower fat milk and alternatives more often.



- Skim, 1%, or 2% milk
- Unflavoured fortified soy beverage
- Skim or 2% evaporated milk
- Plain yogurt (fat free, 1%, or 2% M.F.)
- Lower fat cheese (less than 20% M.F.)
- Lower sodium cottage cheese (fat free, 1%, or 2% M.F.)

- 3.25% (homogenized) milk
- Whole evaporated milk
- Flavoured yogurt (fat free, 1%, or 2% M.F.)
- Flavoured milk (example: chocolate milk)
- Flavoured fortified soy beverage
- Cottage cheese
- Cheeses (more than 20% M.F.)
- Lower fat cream cheese



- Half and half or whipping cream
- Cream-based sauces
- Ice cream or frozen desserts
- Regular cheese spread or cream cheese
- Sweetened condensed milk



Meat and Alternatives

Children 2–8 years:

1 serving a day

Youth 9–13 years:

1 to 2 servings a day

Youth 14–18 years:

2 to 3 servings a day



Examples of 1 serving:

- 2 $\frac{1}{2}$ oz (75 g) meat, fish or poultry
- $\frac{3}{4}$ cup (175 mL) cooked peas, beans, or lentils
- 2 eggs
- $\frac{1}{4}$ cup (60 mL) peanuts, nuts or seeds
- 2 Tbsp (30 mL) peanut, nut or seed butters

Choose lean meats, poultry, and fish, as well as dried peas, beans and lentils more often.



- Baked, broiled, canned, or steamed fish and seafood without sauces
- Dried or canned beans, peas, and lentils
- Eggs
- Extra lean or lean ground beef
- Lean beef, pork, lamb, veal, or wild game
- Natural peanut, nut, or seed butter
- Peanuts, nuts, or seeds
- Skinless chicken or turkey
- Tofu
- Lean luncheon meats (chicken, beef, etc.)

- Baked chicken or turkey with skin
- Lower fat breaded fish or chicken
- Peanut, nut, or seed butters with added oil or sugar



- Bacon, sausage, smokies, or wieners
- Battered deep fried fish, chicken fingers, chicken nuggets
- Chicken wings or fried chicken with skin
- Luncheon meats like salami, bologna



Oils and fats

- Include 2–3 Tbsp (30–45 mL) of healthy fat each day.
- Use vegetable oils such as canola, olive, peanut, or sunflower.
- Choose soft margarines with 0 grams trans fats.
- Limit butter and lard. Avoid hard margarine and shortening.

Enjoy special occasions in a healthy way

- Make a plan with your child ahead of time. For example, they might plan to enjoy smaller portions of food, bring healthy food to share, or choose water to drink.
- If you're hosting or bringing food, make healthier versions of your family's favourite foods. Serve healthy foods along with smaller portions of *choose least often* foods.
- Put the focus on spending time together, or on games or crafts, rather than food.
- Share or cut large portions of food in half.



Active living for the whole family

Physical activity promotes overall health and well-being.



Image from Canadian Obesity Network Image Gallery

- Children copy their parents. Make physical activity a fun part of your family life.
- Encourage children to play outside. Get the whole family involved. Try ball games, running games, skipping, or make up your own games.
- Monitor screen time in your home. Limit time spent watching TV and using computers or other devices.
- Keep TVs, video game consoles, tablets, computers, and smartphones:
 - turned off or put away during meals
 - in a central place where the whole family can see and use them
 - out of your child's bedroom

To learn more about how much activity your child needs each day, visit CSEPGuidelines.ca

For ideas on low-cost activities in your area, visit your local community recreation centre.

For other activity tips, visit HealthyCanadians.gc.ca and search 'get active tip sheets'.

Healthy sleep habits

Sleep is an important part of overall health. Too little sleep can lead to poor attention and school performance, lack of energy, and poor food choices.

To help promote good sleep:

- Create a consistent bedtime routine.
- Go to bed and wake up at about the same time each day.
- Make sure the bedroom is quiet, dark, and free from screens.
- Limit evening screen time.
- Get enough physical activity and reduce sedentary time.
- Avoid caffeine, especially in the afternoon and evening.

To learn more about how much sleep your child needs each day, visit CSEPGuidelines.ca

Promote a healthy body image

- Be a role model for your child. Appreciate your body for what it is and what it can do.
- Make your home a place where people and health matter—not body size.
- Boost children’s self-esteem by noticing their talents and strengths. For example, being kind, artistic, or a good writer.
- Build a positive relationship with your child. Encourage children to share their interests in school, hobbies, and friends.
- Healthy bodies come in many different shapes and sizes. Try not to make comments about shape or size, or compare weights and bodies.

For more information

- Healthyeatingstartshere.ca
- Healthyparentshealthychildren.ca
- Healthycanadians.gc.ca/foodguide
- CSEPGuidelines.ca