

Healthy Eating and Active Living

For Your **1 to 5 Year Old**



Alberta

What's Inside...



Healthy Eating and Active Living For Your 1 to 5 Year Old

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Healthy Eating and Active Living For Your 1 to 5 Year Old

As a parent or caregiver, you influence a child from the moment they're born.

Young children learn by watching. They watch what you do. They watch family and friends. Then they imitate what they see, and the habits they learn in the early years can form a pattern that lasts a lifetime. The eating habits children learn in those first years have a lasting effect on how they grow and develop. When you guide your preschooler about what to eat and provide opportunities for them to be active, you help them to make and value healthy choices. Making healthy choices about food and physical activity helps children feel good about themselves. Most importantly, these healthy choices help them grow the way nature meant them to grow.

Usually, children from one to three years old are called toddlers. From three until they turn six they're often called preschoolers. To keep things simple, in this booklet preschooler is used to mean children one through five years old. Parent is used to mean parents, caregivers or anyone else involved in the care of a child.



Encourage Healthy Eating Habits

Enjoy mealtimes

We eat because our bodies need food, and we eat meals together so we can spend time together. Mealtimes are also a time for children to learn new skills.

Research shows that having family meals are extremely important in shaping your child's positive habits, nutrient intakes, body image, and body weight.



Fast Fact

Parents/caregivers and children have different jobs when it comes to food and eating. Allowing your child to do their part will help prevent feeding difficulties.

- Your role as a parent or caregiver is to decide what, when and where to offer food.
- Your child's role is to decide whether or not to eat and how much to eat.

Parents or caregivers decide **WHAT** foods to offer

- Be a role model and demonstrate healthy eating habits yourself. You are in charge of shopping for healthy foods and deciding which foods to bring into the house and put on the table.
- Offer your child a variety of healthy foods. Limit treats to special occasions. Think about what your family likes to eat, but don't limit the menu to just what they're used to.

- Offer new foods, but just a small amount at first. It may take as many as 10 to 15 tries at different times before your child accepts a new food.
- Children like to eat with their fingers and that's perfectly okay! Serve food in a form they can handle themselves.
- Even small children can help in some way in making a meal. Get your child involved in helping, and they'll likely be interested in eating what they helped to make.

Parents or caregivers decide **WHEN** to offer food

- Children need regular meals and regular snacks to grow well. That usually means three meals and two to three snacks a day.
- Plan and offer meals and snacks at regular times, then your child will be hungry when it's time to eat.
- Knowing that meals and snacks come at regular times helps your child feel safe about eating. They won't wonder when food is coming next, or want to keep eating through the day.
- Offer food and drinks at mealtimes and at snacktimes, but not in between. If your child is thirsty between meals or snacks, offer water.

Parents or caregivers decide **WHERE** to offer food

- Children eat best when they sit down for meals and snacks, rather than running around.
- Sit down with your child and eat meals with them. Encourage a pleasant atmosphere. It's easier then for everyone to eat well and enjoy the meal.
- Turn off the TV and radio during mealtimes. This will help your preschooler focus on eating as well as learning eating skills.

Children decide **WHETHER** or not to eat

- Children's appetites change from day to day. Some days children seem to eat a lot. Other days they won't eat much. This is normal!
- Stay positive. Remember that trying to force a child to eat does not work.

Children decide **HOW MUCH** to eat

- Children know when they are hungry and when they are full. Allow your child to leave the plate unfinished. Never bribe them to eat "just one more bite."
- A child's portion tends to be smaller than an adult's. Children have small stomachs, so they need to eat small amounts more often.
- Your child's steady growth is the best way to tell that they are eating enough.



Eating skills and changing behaviours

Your preschooler will gradually become more skilled at chewing and swallowing and at using a spoon and fork. Here are some of the changes in eating skills and behaviours you may expect from your growing child.



Age	Skills	Behaviours
Babies 12 to 18 Months Old	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Accepts different textures of food • Eats a variety of nutritious foods • Likes eating with hands • Drinks from a cup • Has difficulty with spoon and fork 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Wants foods others are eating • Tries different behaviours to see how you will react • Develops food preferences • Imitates others
Toddlers 18 Months to 3 Years Old	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Likes eating with hands • Uses fork and spoon with more skill • Likes similar patterns and routine • Likes foods with different textures and finger foods • Holds glass or cup with one hand • Better at chewing, but may still choke on certain foods 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Has food likes and dislikes • Is easily distracted and dawdles over food at times • Has very clear ideas about eating or not eating • Can be very demanding • Feelings of hunger decrease as growth slows down • Insists on doing things by themselves • Likes to help in kitchen • Food jags (eating just one or two kinds of foods for a few days or longer) are common • Some foods must be given many times before a child will try it • Food eaten today may be refused tomorrow and asked for in a week
Preschoolers 3 to 5 Years Old	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Can feed themselves • Meals are less messy • Chews most food • Can pour liquids from a small jug • Likes shapes, colours, ABCs • Eats well with spoon and fork • Is able to eat hard foods like popcorn and nuts • Some preschoolers are also able to use a knife, but need to learn how to use it safely 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improved appetite and interest in food • Asks for favourite foods • May want to help prepare and serve food • Influenced by TV commercials, family, and friends • Often distracted and would rather talk than eat • Prefers simple foods • May have fussy eating behaviour • Food jags (eating just one or two kinds of foods for a few days or longer) are common • Some foods must be given many times before a child will try it • Food eaten today may be refused tomorrow and asked for in a week



Foods to grow on

These charts are general guidelines based on *Eating Well with Canada's Food Guide*. Use these along with your own best judgment.

Recommended Daily Servings			Food Group	Examples of One Serving
Girls & Boys 1-2 Years*	Girls & Boys 2-3 Years*	Girls & Boys 4-5 Years		
up to 4	4	5	Vegetables & Fruit <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Eat at least one dark green & one orange vegetable per day • Choose vegetables & fruit prepared with little or no added fat, sugar or salt • Serve no more than 125 mL ($\frac{1}{2}$ cup) of full strength juice a day 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cooked vegetables 125 mL ($\frac{1}{2}$ cup) • Fresh vegetable slices 125 mL ($\frac{1}{2}$ cup) • Leafy salad vegetables 250 mL (1 cup) • 1 medium fresh fruit • Diced fresh, frozen or canned fruit 125 mL ($\frac{1}{2}$ cup) • 100% unsweetened juice 125 mL ($\frac{1}{2}$ cup)
up to 3	3	4	Grain Products <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Choose whole grains at least half of the time • Choose grains that are lower in fat, sugar or salt 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Bread 1 slice (35 g) • Rice or pasta 125 mL ($\frac{1}{2}$ cup) • Bannock (2.5" X 2.5" X .75") • Pita or tortilla wrap $\frac{1}{2}$ small (35 g) • Hot cereal 175 mL ($\frac{3}{4}$ cup) • Cold flaked cereal 30g, 250 mL (1 cup)
2	2	2	Milk & Alternatives <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide 2 servings of skim, 1%, or 2% milk or fortified soy beverage every day to help meet vitamin D needs • Children under 2 years of age should be served whole/homogenized (3.5% MF) milk 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Milk or fortified soy beverage 250 mL (1 cup) • Cheese 50 g ($1\frac{1}{2}$ oz) • Yogurt or kefir 175 g ($\frac{3}{4}$ cup)
1	1	1	Meat & Alternatives <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Have meat alternatives such as beans, lentils and tofu more often • Eat at least 2 servings of fish per week • Choose lean meat and alternatives prepared with little or no added fat or salt 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cooked fish, poultry, lean meat, wild meat 75 g (2.5 oz) or 125 mL ($\frac{1}{2}$ cup) • 2 eggs • Cooked legumes such as beans or lentils 175 mL ($\frac{3}{4}$ cup) • Tofu 175 mL ($\frac{3}{4}$ cup) • Peanut butter 30 mL (2 tbsp)** • Nuts and seeds 60 mL ($\frac{1}{4}$ cup)**

You will find reading nutrition labels will help you choose between similar kinds of foods.

Fat-free, sugar-free and calorie reduced foods should not be fed to children.

* *Eating Well with Canada's Food Guide* recommends serving sizes for ages 2 to 51+. For ages 1 to 3, servings can be divided into smaller amounts and served throughout the day. For example, one half of a vegetable or fruit serving may be served at two different snacks to equal one full vegetable or fruit serving.

**Choking risk for small children

Fast Fact

Plan meals and snacks according to *Eating Well with Canada's Food Guide* which is available at www.hc-sc.gc.ca/fn-an/food-guide-aliment/index_e.html.

What about oils and fats?

Children need more healthy fat than adults. Do not restrict nutritious foods because of their fat content. Offer a variety of foods from the four food groups including some choices that contain healthy fat such as peanut butter, full fat cheese and avocado.

Fat Facts:

- *Eating Well with Canada's Food Guide* suggests including 30-45 mL (2-3 tbsp) unsaturated fat each day including oil used for cooking, salad dressings, non-hydrogenated margarine and mayonnaise.
- The healthiest fats to offer your child are unsaturated fats found in fish, avocados, nuts/seeds (if your child is over 3-4 years and won't choke on these), peanut butter/other nut butters and vegetable oils.
- Processed trans fat is unhealthy for the heart. Trans fat is found in packaged foods, deep fried foods, baked items and restaurant foods which use hydrogenated vegetable oils or vegetable oil shortening. Look at the Nutrition Facts labels and choose foods with zero grams trans fats. Look at the ingredient list and choose foods that have no hydrogenated vegetable oil or vegetable oil shortening.



Fast Fact

To learn more about what's on food labels, visit the *Healthy Eating is in Store for You* website at www.healthyeatingisinstore.ca or Health Canada at www.healthcanada.gc.ca

- Another fat to eat less of is saturated fat which is generally a solid fat at room temperature and is found in foods such as the white fat in meat, poultry skin, cream, and packaged foods with palm/coconut oils and cocoa butter. Look on the Nutrition Facts labels and choose foods low in saturated fats.

Foods to limit

Foods & beverages high in calories, fat, sugar or salt (sodium)

Limit foods and beverages such as cakes and pastries, chocolate and candies, cookies and granola bars, doughnuts and muffins, ice cream and frozen desserts, french fries, potato chips, nachos and other salty snacks, fruit-flavoured drinks, soft drinks and sweetened hot or cold drinks.

These foods can be offered occasionally but not instead of choices from healthy food groups. Caffeinated beverages and sport and energy drinks should not be given to children.

Foods and beverages to watch for dental health

Avoid offering snack foods and beverages that are sticky and sweet such as dried fruit, dried fruit bars, candy and pop unless children brush their teeth right after eating them. Sticky sweet foods and beverages and non-stop snacking can cause cavities.

By 12 to 14 months, a child should be weaned from the bottle. Constant drinking of any beverage other than water, from a bottle or no-spill training cup, is linked to cavities, and should be avoided.

Questions about beverages?

Drinking too many beverages such as milk, fruit juice, fruity drinks and pop can fill your child up and then they may not have enough room for healthy meals and snacks.

Limit juice to $\frac{1}{2}$ cup/125 mL per day. Be sure to choose 100% pure unsweetened juice, NOT fruit “drinks, punches, beverages, or cocktails” since they are high in added sugar and contain much less if any vitamins and minerals.

Fast Fact

Quench thirst with water!

Offer your child water regularly, especially if they are more active or if the weather is hot.

Choking hazards

Watch out for foods that can cause choking in children under 3-4 years of age

- Solid foods which are hard, small, and round and smooth or sticky such as candies, cough drops and popcorn.
- Snacks using skewers or toothpicks.
- Wieners and sausages: cut into long strips, and then into bite-size pieces.
- Raw fruits: remove pits and seeds, and cut into bite-size pieces. Cut grapes in half or quarters.
- Raw veggies: cut into narrow strips, or grate the vegetables.
- Peanut butter: spread thinly; never serve it right off a spoon.



Iron

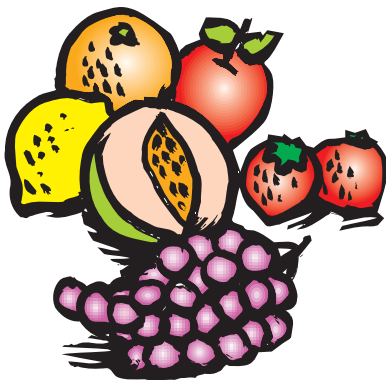
What you need to know about iron deficiency

Iron is a mineral that is important for brain growth and development and forming red blood cells, which transport oxygen in the body.

Iron deficiency and anemia are common between the ages of 18 months and 3 years. Low iron can lead to poor brain development. Your child may also be tired, cranky and more likely to get sick if their iron intake is low. If you are concerned about iron deficiency, talk to your doctor.

Preventing iron deficiency

- Foods such as meat, poultry, seafood, eggs, beans/lentils, nuts/seeds, breakfast cereal, dried fruit, and spinach are good sources of iron.
- Iron is best used by the body when eaten with foods that contain vitamin C. Good sources of vitamin C include oranges, kiwis, tomatoes, potatoes, peppers, and berries.
- Serve no more than 500 mL (2 cups) of milk and limit juice to 125mL (1/2 cup) per day. If your child fills up on too many fluids they may not have an appetite for solid foods which contain iron.



Supplements

Should I give supplements to my child?

Vitamin and mineral supplements and other food supplements are generally not needed if your child eats a variety of foods from each food group from *Eating Well with Canada's Food Guide*. Supplements don't take the place of food and healthy eating.

There are situations where a child may need a supplement. For example, if a child:

- ☐ Hardly ever eats foods containing iron and develops an iron deficiency.
- ☐ Follows a strict vegetarian diet or rarely eats meat or milk products.
- ☐ Usually drinks less than 500 mL (2 cups) of milk each day. Milk provides calcium and vitamin D.
- ☐ Consistently refuses to eat any item from an entire food group.

Your family doctor or a registered nutritionist or dietitian can help you decide if your child needs a supplement. Like any other pill, supplements can be dangerous if too many are taken. Be sure to keep supplements out of reach of children.

Constipation

How to help your child with normal bowel movements

Your child may have constipation if they have infrequent, difficult or painful bowel movements and/or hard stools (poops).

Why does constipation happen?

- Not eating enough fibre-rich foods such as whole grains, vegetables, fruits, beans/lentils, and nuts/seeds.
- Drinking too much juice or milk which limits appetite for fibre-rich foods.
- Not going to the bathroom on time because of fear, pain and/or shyness.

What can I do to help my child?

- Offer foods rich in fibre such as whole grains, vegetables and fruit.
- Offer plenty of water throughout the day.
- Limit milk to 500 mL (2 cups) and juice to 125mL ($\frac{1}{2}$ cup) per day to ensure your child has an appetite for solid foods which contain fibre.

- Teach your child to take the time to sit and relax for a bowel movement. This will help them have a bowel movement on a regular basis.
- Remind your child to go to the bathroom on time rather than holding bowel movements.
- If constipation persists, see your doctor.

Food allergies

A food allergy can occur any time from a few minutes to a few hours after eating a food. The symptoms of a food allergy may include itching in the mouth, vomiting, diarrhea, hives, eczema, or asthma. The most common food allergies are to peanuts, tree nuts (such as pecans or walnuts), eggs, fish (especially shellfish), milk, soy and wheat.

Talk to your health care professional if you have concerns or questions about food allergies.

Fast Fact

For more information on food allergies visit www.anaphylaxis.ca or www.foodallergy.org.



Food safety

Food handling

Teach your child about the importance of cleaning, preparing, storing and cooking food properly:

- Wash hands with warm soapy water for at least 20 seconds before eating and handling food, after using the bathroom, or touching animals. Teach them a song such as “Twinkle, Twinkle, Little Star,” which is just about the right length of time for cleaning hands.
- Refrigerate foods that should be kept cold as soon as meals are over.
- Wash kitchen and table surfaces every day.
- Keep counters clean. Remind your child that backpacks, pets, and sporting goods don’t belong on the counter.
- Use a clean cloth to wash your child’s hands and face.
- Use cold packs for lunchboxes and insulated lunch bags.
- Use a Thermos® to keep foods hot.
- Wash fruits and vegetables with water before eating.
- Cook foods to proper temperatures.

Foods that can make your child sick

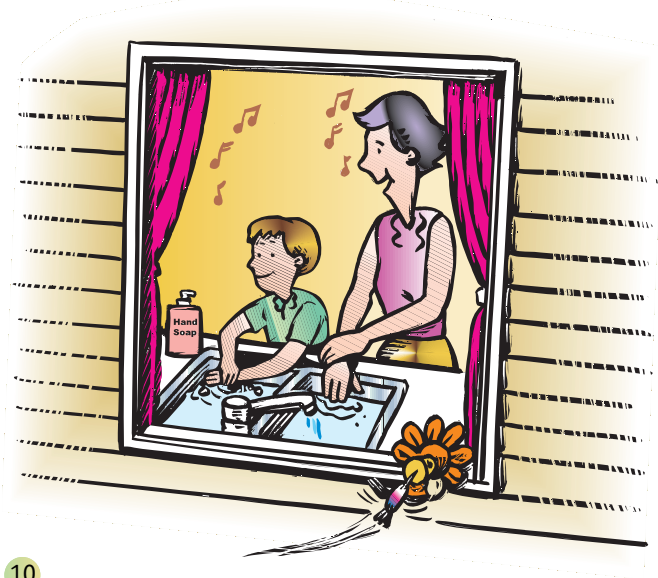
Don’t serve the following foods to children since they contain certain bacteria that can make a child sick:

- Raw sprouts such as alfalfa and bean sprouts. Cooked sprouts are safe.
- Unpasteurized fruit juice, milk, cheese (especially soft cheese or blue-veined cheese).
- Uncooked dough, batter, or foods that contain raw eggs.
- Undercooked meat, poultry, or seafood.

Fish safety

Fish is an excellent source of protein and healthy fats. *Eating Well with Canada’s Food Guide* recommends choosing at least two food guide servings of fish per week.

- Health Canada provides advice for limiting exposure to mercury from certain types of fish. Refer to www.healthcanada.gc.ca for the latest information.



Fast Fact

For more information about food safety visit:

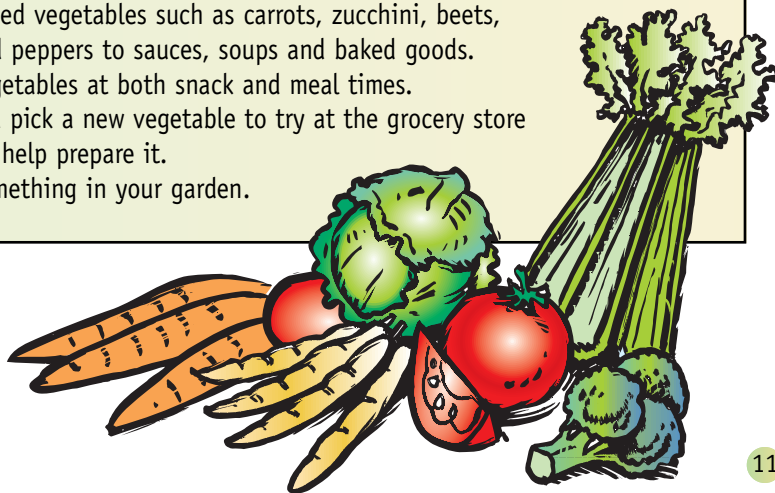
- www.healthcanada.gc.ca
- www.canfightbac.org
- www.foodsafetyline.org

Feeding frenzies & picky eating

Below are some suggestions on how to cope with common feeding issues.

Talk to a registered dietitian or your doctor about picky eating concerns.

Common Issue	What to Do About It
Meal Refusal	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Try to make mealtimes pleasant and positive. Don't force your child to eat.• Your child's appetite will change day to day. Respect that children know when they are hungry and when they are full.• Occasional skipped meals are normal and are not a concern as long as your child is growing normally.• If your child refuses a meal but asks for a snack 20 minutes later, decline their requests and tell them when the next snack time is planned. This includes requests for all beverages except water.
Won't Try New Foods	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Offer small amounts of a new food.• Try offering a new food at the start of a meal when your child is most hungry.• Understand that it may take 10 to 15 tries at different times before your child accepts a new food.• Encourage your child to try one bite of a new food.• Offer new foods when your child is with other children who eat that food.• Get your child involved in preparing the new food or offer it in a fun shape or theme.
"Food Jag" (wants to eat one or two kinds of food for a few days or longer)	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• It is normal for your child to have strong likes and dislikes. Be patient, as favourite foods will change from day to day.• Serve foods your child likes but also include a variety of other nutritious foods.• Avoid catering and serving only what your child requests, your child needs to learn to eat the same foods the rest of the family is eating.
Won't Eat Vegetables	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Offer a plate with a colourful variety of vegetables so your child can choose what they like.• Serve vegetables raw or lightly cooked rather than over cooked and soggy.• Try adding pureed vegetables such as carrots, zucchini, beets, squash, and red peppers to sauces, soups and baked goods.• Try offering vegetables at both snack and meal times.• Have your child pick a new vegetable to try at the grocery store and have them help prepare it.• Try growing something in your garden.





Common Issue	What to Do About It
Won't Eat Meat	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Offer other protein rich foods such as eggs, fish, cheese, peanut butter, soy foods such as tofu, and cooked legumes such as beans and lentils.• Serve soft meats such as ground meat or poultry or dice meat into small bites for easy chewing.• Make meat more appealing by blending them into soups, stews, and tomato sauce.• Offer other iron rich foods such as breakfast cereals, dark green leafy vegetables such as spinach, eggs, soy food such as tofu, legumes such as beans and lentils, and dried fruit.
Won't Drink Milk	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Offer milk in small 125 mL (½ cup) servings at several meals and snacks.• Offer your child a "smoothie" made with milk, yogurt, and fruit for breakfast or as a snack.• Make homemade popsicles with milk, yogurt and fruit.• Use milk instead of water to cook soups, or in hot cereal.• Make homemade pudding with milk and add extra dry powdered milk.• Yogurt and cheese provide calcium, but not vitamin D.• If your child does not drink at least 500 mL (2 cups) of milk each day speak to your doctor or registered dietitian to see if your child needs a supplement.
Drinks Too Much Milk	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Offer milk at the end of a meal rather than the beginning so your child has an appetite to eat solid food.• Serve no more than 500 mL (2-3 cups) of milk per day since milk can be filling and decrease your child's appetite for eating other foods.
Drinks Too Much Juice	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Offer juice at the end of a meal rather than the beginning so your child has an appetite to eat solid food.• Serve no more than 125 mL (½ cup) of full strength juice per day.
Meals Take a Very Long Time to Eat	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Slow down. When family meals are rushed, your child does not have enough time to explore and try new foods.• Be sure to allow 20 to 30 minutes for meals. If after that time your child has not eaten anything, remove your child's plate without making a fuss or commenting.• Sit down to eat with your child and remove distractions such as the TV and radio.



MEALS as easy as 1-2-3

Meal and snack planning basics

- Young children have small stomachs and therefore need to eat small, regular meals and snacks throughout the day.
- Serve a variety of foods from each food group, including favourites, as well as other healthy foods the rest of the family eats.
- Allow two to three hours between the end of one meal or snack and the start of the next one.
- One Food Guide Serving from a food group can be divided up into smaller amounts and served throughout the day. For example, a half slice of bread may be served at two different snacks to add up to one full grain products serving.
- Snacks should include foods that might be missed at meals such as fruits and vegetables.
- Get your children involved! Toddlers will enjoy watching and helping with food preparation while preschoolers will be ready for making parts of the meals together and talking about which foods are healthiest.
- Make food fun! Children are influenced by how food looks. Use foods in different colours and shapes by adding blueberries to oatmeal to make “purple porridge” or cutting cheese with cookie cutters. Make foods into a theme such as calling asparagus “trees” or displaying sliced fruit on a plate in the shape of a face.

Fast Fact

Goals for Meals:

Plan breakfast, lunch, and supper with choices from three to four of the food groups.

- Start with a vegetable and/or fruit
- Add a grain product
- Complete the meal with a milk or alternative and/or meat or alternative

Goals for Snacks:

Plan two to three snacks per day with choices from one to two of the food groups.

Sample menu plan

MEAL	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY	SUNDAY
BREAKFAST	oatmeal or oatbran hot cereal with blueberries milk	whole grain toast cut into strips scrambled eggs orange juice	bran-based cereal milk sliced pear or apple water	yogurt parfait: yogurt fresh or frozen berries granola water	high fibre waffle(s) or a whole wheat wrap peanut butter (or other nut butter) banana	whole wheat English muffin cottage cheese or yogurt cantaloupe or honeydew melon water	cubes of cheese whole grain crackers apple juice water
SNACK	banana bread milk	raw carrots and sugar snap or snow peas water	yogurt & dry cereal water	celery sticks cheese water	canned pineapple yogurt water	snack mix with dry cereal and dried fruit water	whole wheat pita bread and hummus water
LUNCH	pizza bagel: bagel tomato sauce mozzarella cheese green pepper 100% fruit juice	vegetable soup tuna melt: toasted tuna and cheese sandwich fresh or dried apricots milk	wrap with turkey, cheddar cheese, lettuce and red pepper grapes, cut up water	cold or hot French toast wedges with jam sliced fresh or frozen strawberries milk	grilled ham and cheese sandwich cherry tomatoes watermelon milk	pasta and meat sauce raw carrots fruit slices milk	quesadilla: grated cheddar cheese, diced cooked chicken, green pepper top with salsa orange slices milk
SNACK	hard-cooked egg whole grain crackers	celery and peanut butter milk	"smoothie" made with yogurt, frozen berries and milk	applesauce milk	banana and strawberries with fruit yogurt dip	bran muffin milk	yogurt tube (frozen) oatmeal cookie
SUPPER	baked fish such as sole or salmon brown and wild rice steamed green beans or asparagus milk	burritos: whole wheat wraps with seasoned ground beef/chicken, shredded lettuce, diced tomatoes milk	BBQ pork chops whole wheat couscous or rice steamed peas milk	baked homemade chicken fingers (roll in breadcrumbs) homemade healthy fries (thin sliced potatoes tossed with oil and baked) salad water	baked beans in tomato sauce whole wheat biscuit raw veggies and dip milk	hamburger patty whole wheat bun tossed green salad milk	chili with baked potato and grated cheddar cheese cucumber and raw zucchini sticks and dip milk
SNACK	kiwi fruit milk	rice pudding with raisins water	pumpkin or other fruit muffin milk	diced mango or canned/fresh peaches milk	yogurt and fresh/frozen berries water	cheese and crackers water	apple crisp milk

Remember your child will decide *HOW MUCH* to eat; all you need to do is provide a healthy menu with a variety of foods from all the food groups. Make sure to offer water throughout the day.

Encourage Your Preschooler to Be Active

It's healthy to be physically active throughout your life. People sometimes think young children are naturally active, but that's not so. Television, video games and busy schedules can fill up a child's day so there's no time for play or physical activity.

Early childhood is an ideal time for your child to be active. This is when they enjoy learning to run, jump, climb and play ball. This is when you can play an important role to teach them and lead by example. Children of active parents are more likely to participate in physical activity themselves and to continue involvement in an active lifestyle as they grow. By making opportunities for your child to be physically active, you can encourage them to enjoy physical activity for a lifetime.

How much physical activity toddlers and preschoolers need

Health Canada has not made a recommendation for the amount and nature of physical activity to promote healthy growth and development during the toddler and preschool years. Here are some general guidelines:

- Toddlers need opportunities for active play and exposure to active role models.
- Every day, preschoolers need at least:
 - 60 minutes* of structured physical activity
 - 60 minutes to several hours* of unstructured physical activity.



Structured physical activity

Structured physical activity includes games and activities that you teach your child or that you do with them. This helps your child learn what they can do. It helps develop movement skills, and it also helps them learn to get along with others. Structured activities include walking, swimming, bike riding, gymnastics, active games or sports.

Unstructured physical activity

Unstructured physical activity (also referred to as active play) is supervised time for your child to play actively alone or with other children. This is a physically active time when children decide what to do and how to do it, usually without direct help from an adult. Unstructured activities include playing inside or outside, on play structures, building forts, or by running and jumping.

* According to physical activity guidelines for children released by the American National Association for Sport and Physical Education publication "Active Start: A statement of Physical Activity Guidelines for Children Birth to Five Years," 2002.



Encouraging physical activity

You child looks up to you, and is happy to learn and spend time with you.

Include daily physical activity as part of your 'together time', and use these ideas to encourage your child to be physically active:

- 1) **Be a role model.** Whenever possible, play along with your child at their level. When adults take part in their play, a child will watch, learn, and try new things, and their self-esteem and skills improve.
- 2) **Emphasize fun!** Movement and activity should be fun for your child, and it should be part of your whole family's daily life. Include your child in choosing activities and encourage active play as two ways to help your preschooler be physically active.
- 3) **Support and praise.** Positive feedback helps your child feel good about themselves and encourages them to remain active. Focus your comments on what they're doing well. Avoid criticism or negativity. Be a cheerleader!
- 4) **Encourage all types of activities.** All movement is good movement. Encourage a variety of activities, whether your preschooler is a girl or a boy. Avoid comments about what little boys and little girls should or should not do. Introduce your child to women and men who are physically active. As a parent, you can be a role model yourself and show it's fun and enjoyable to be physically active.
- 5) **Keep it simple, safe and sound.** Children are easy to please when it comes to activity. Simple activities like walking, playing, jumping, and climbing are fun and cost effective. Dress your child to be active: in shoes they can run in and clothes they can get dirty in. Ensure a safe environment to play in. Photograph your child being active and display the pictures. Plan outings that offer physical activity. Visit playgrounds, trails, parks. Go to community events that have physical activities for children. Think active.
- 6) **Teach new movement skills.** Children like to learn. Running, jumping, twisting, kicking, throwing, and catching are basic movement skills that children like to master. Your child learns and develops them by practising. These skills are the basis for movements that are more complex like sport skills, dance or games and they're the foundation for lifelong physical activity. Begin each activity by asking your child to do something you know they can do well. Give time to practise. Celebrate, then add on!
- 7) **Try new things.** Variety and creativity will keep your child interested. Choose activities that are suitable to the time of year and the resources available to you. Vary the activity and vary the environment.
Try different activities that focus on:
 - endurance. Running, jumping and swimming strengthen the heart and lungs.
 - flexibility. Gymnastics and dancing encourage bending, stretching, reaching.
 - strength. Climbing builds strong muscles and bones.Make it more important to participate and develop skills than to win or get results.
- 8) **Whatever the weather.** Your child still needs physical activity every day, even if it's rainy, snowy, or cold outdoors. Play indoors or dress for the weather and go outside. Winter is a great time for your child to explore and learn outdoors. Build a snow man. Make snow angels, or patterns walking in fresh snow.
- 9) **Increase your child's active time.** A simple way to encourage activity is to limit your child's TV viewing (or computer time) to just one hour a day. If your child is having fun while keeping active, they may not even miss it. *Children under two years old should not view any television.*
- 10) **Take breaks.** It's natural for your child to want to take breaks between short bursts of activity. A child who is physically active needs to take breaks for a drink of water and to cool down. Follow your child's lead.

Appropriate abilities & activities

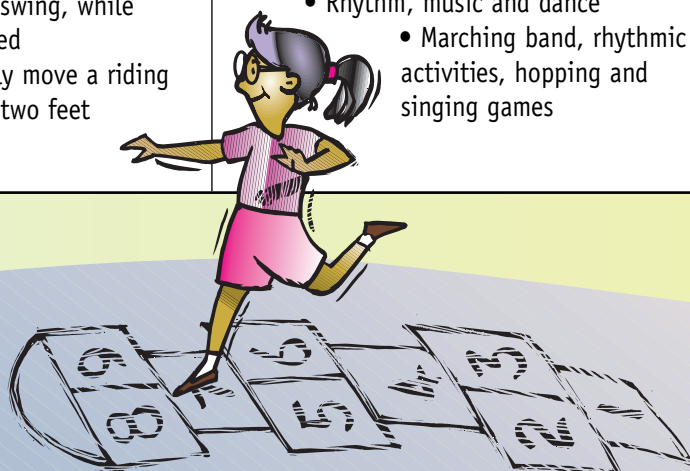
The kind of things your child can do depends on their age and stage of development.

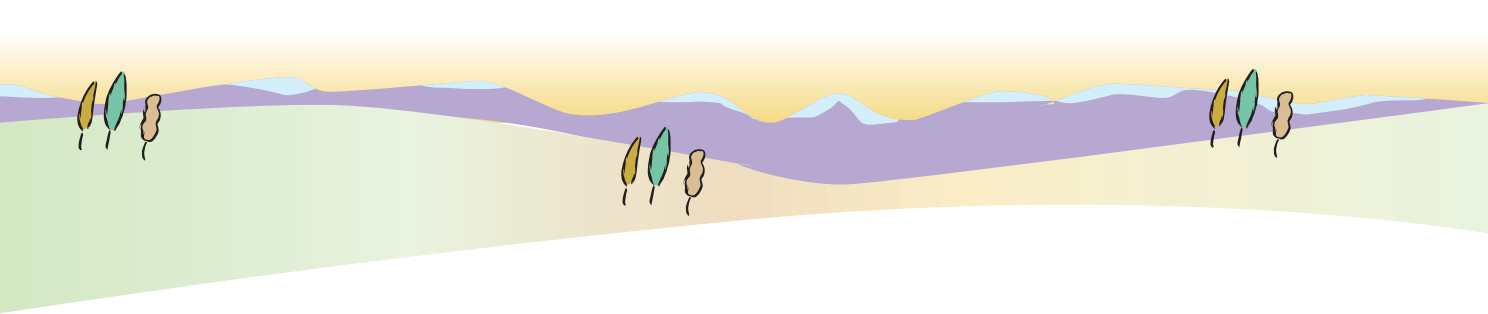
There is a basic pattern to the way children develop. But within that pattern, children grow and develop abilities at very different rates. The physical skills

and abilities of each child are just as different. An activity one child likes may not appeal to another child.

Use the tables below to learn about your child. As you see them developing certain skills, use the Activities part of the chart in the right column to get ideas for how to encourage their development.

Age	Abilities	Activities
Babies 12 to 18 Months Old	Children are just beginning or are able to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Walk more steadily • Run • Push, pull, take apart • Carry • Climb on and grab things • Roll objects on the floor 	Things I can do with my children include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Play at walking backwards or sideways, run with them, climb stairs with them • Provide pull toys to encourage children to pull themselves up or walk • Use soft balls or beanbags that can be thrown safely to teach throwing • Allow children to carry objects from one place to another • Play at movement or flexibility such as twisting, nodding heads, and touching toes • Water play
Toddlers 18 Months to 3 Years Old	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Walk forward and backward, run and jump and climb up and down stairs • Push a chair in position to obtain out-of-reach objects • Walk along a balance beam or board with or without help • Throw using two hands • Kick a large ball without losing balance, stop it with two hands before kicking again • Hit a suspended ball with a large bat • Crawl and climb on play structures and household furniture • Sit balanced on a swing, while being gently pushed • Sit on and skillfully move a riding toy, pushing with two feet 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Play at movement in various directions, different speeds and use different sized steps, etc. • Kick at balls to learn to balance • Listen to music and dance • Stop and go, walking and running games, tag • Balance beam walking (25 cm high or less) • Follow the leader obstacle course • Ball play, throw and retrieve, ball kicking • Hitting and batting • Ice skating with assistance • Water play and swimming <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Rhythm, music and dance • Marching band, rhythmic activities, hopping and singing games





Age	Abilities	Activities
Preschoolers 3 to 4 Years Old	Children are just beginning or are able to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Go up and down stairs by alternating their feet • Walk forward and backward with different speed and directions • Walk balanced on tip toes • Jump with skill, while running, or jumping over objects • Throw overhand • Catch a large ball • Kick a ball with more accuracy • Hit a ball off batting tee with large bat • Climb with co-ordination, balance and a firm grip on play structure • Pedal and maneuver a tricycle, or small two-wheeled bicycle with or without training wheels • Swim with arms and legs, while supported by adult 	Things I can do with my children include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Walking and running games; tag • Jumping over a line • Balance beam – not more than 50 cm or waist height off the ground (hold hand or stand – beside child for safety) • Throwing and catching • Hitting and batting • Kicking to a partner and retrieving • Ice skating • Play structure or obstacle course with ladders, tunnels, ropes, balance board • Swimming, parents and tot swimming classes • Rhythm, music and dance • Blanket and parachute games
Preschoolers 4 to 5 Years Old	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Walk, run, and jump well • Climb big play structures to their own comfort level • Catch and throw large and small objects with improved accuracy • Develop hand-eye co-ordination • Develop spatial awareness – how the child judges movement in relation to objects and people • Develop the concept of teamwork but game skills are not developed • Respond readily to rhythm and music • Desire vigorous activity • Tire easily, but recover quickly 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Running and skipping • Gymnastics and martial arts • Ropes, bars and climbers • Games with objects of various sizes, shapes and textures such as balls, beanbags, scoops, and bats • Games with a minimal number of rules and instructions • Small groups games emphasizing co-operation • Ice skating • Swimming • Cross-country skiing • Rhythmic movement like walking, marching, clapping and running • Strenuous activities with rest and water breaks

Fast Fact

Over half of Canadian children are not active enough for optimal growth and development.

- Your role as a parent or caregiver is to teach them about physical activity and their health, and encourage them to get active. Children learn by doing. Move together.
- Your child’s role is to decide what activities they like, and to make daily efforts at physical activity.

Mixing up movement

Need some ideas on how to get moving? Below you will find some fun ideas to encourage your family to keep physically active. Ask your child to help create your family's list of activities.

Structured Activities	Unstructured Activities
Walk Get creative with your weekly walks. Play games, explore, and have fun. Here are some ideas. <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Walk and explore your neighbourhood• Walk to a nearby park and explore nature Activity Classes Your community may have classes that you can sign up for that will provide activities and games for your toddler. Not only will your child benefit from play with others, but you will benefit from interaction with other parents and caregivers. <ul style="list-style-type: none">\$ Tiny Tot Gym Class\$ Preschool Dance and Movement Class\$ Parent & Tot Swim Class Rhythmic Activities <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Dance to different kinds of music• Play with drumming and marching Games <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Play parachute or blanket games• Build an obstacle or climbing course (indoors or out)• Freeze tag• Bean bag toss and carpet games• Follow the leader• Move like different animals. Hop like a bunny, slither like a snake, fly like a bird, gallop like a horse, jump like a kangaroo Ball Games <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Kick and block• Throw and catch• Roll back and forth• Roll on top (big ball)	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Building blanket forts• Stretching and moving activities• Outdoor hopping, skipping, digging, climbing, running, jumping• Dancing (making up your own dance) Family Outings <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Nature walk or hike\$ Walk through the zoo\$ Amusement park• Playground visit\$ Skating• Picnic in the park• Scavenger hunt• Bicycle ride\$ Swimming\$ Farmer's market Other Ideas <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Outdoor playground• Big ball bounce activities\$ Children's play zone• Play dates with other children and parents

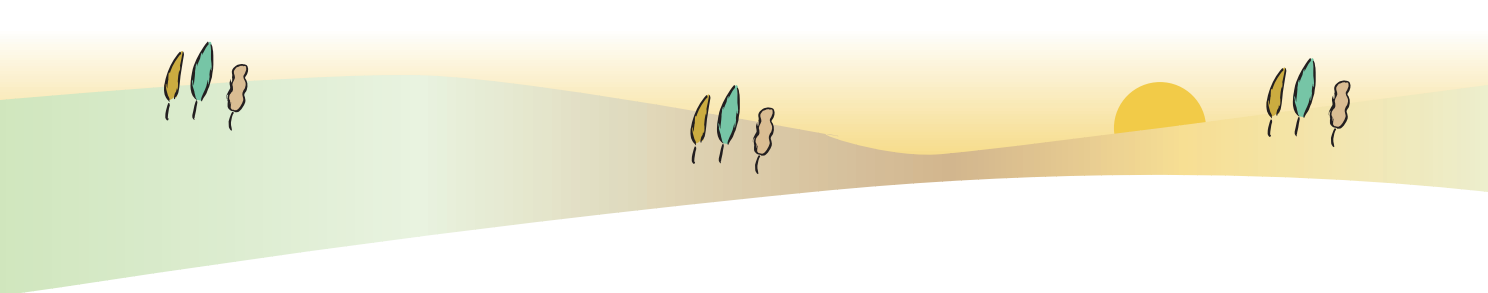


\$ Activities with this symbol may have a fee associated with them.

Fast Fact

Children's Fitness Tax Credit

The Government of Canada has a children's fitness tax credit of up to \$500, when paid by parents, to register a child in an eligible program of physical activity. For more information please contact the Canada Revenue Agency: www.cra-arc.gc.ca/fitness or call 1-800-387-1193.



Planning together time

Every day is a chance to get active. To improve your success and ensure variety, it is important to plan ahead for the week’s activities.

Activity planning will help you fit ‘together time’ into your busy day by:

- helping you plan regular opportunities for active play.
- helping you make sure your preschooler is active every day.
- helping cut down on inactive time. That’s the time spent on things like television watching and computer games.

Use this week-at-a-glance sample activity planner as a guide for planning activities you can do with your child. Adapt it to suit your schedule and activity preferences.

	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY	SUNDAY
SAMPLE WEEK	Walk	Tiny Tot Gym Class	Walk	Rhythmic Activities	Walk	Parent and Tot Swim Class	Family Park Outing
	Indoor free play	Outdoor free play	Indoor free play	Outdoor free play	Indoor free play	Outdoor free play	Outdoor free play

Use this chart to map out your own activity plan. Get your child involved in the process. Post it where you can view it daily, and make regular physical activity a daily part of your routine. Each day be sure to include at least one *Structured Activity* and at least one *Unstructured Activity*.

	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY	SUNDAY
WEEK 1							
WEEK 2							
WEEK 3							
WEEK 4							

Growth and Healthy Body Image

Is my child growing well?

Children come in many different sizes and shapes

- Your child may be taller, shorter, lighter or heavier than other children of the same age. Each child has their own pattern of growth that is natural for them.
- If you worry your child is growing too slowly or too fast, ask your family doctor about it. Ask them to look at your child's growth records and take new measurements.
- The *pattern* of growth is more important than a *single measurement*. If there is a change in the pattern, it's important to find out why. Then you can get the proper help to prevent health problems now and in the future.

What affects growth?

There are seven factors that influence how your child grows:

- | | |
|---------------------|----------------------|
| • Family history | • Medical health |
| • Ethnic background | • Nutritional status |
| • Age | • Physical activity |
| • Gender | habits |

Slow growth

- There are several things to consider if you are worried about your child's weight. A child that has always been small and/or has parents that are slight is much different than a child that has suddenly stopped gaining weight or lost weight.
- If your child isn't gaining weight or height as expected, visit your doctor.

Fast Fact

Remember! Keep the focus on energy and feeling good. Avoid focusing on weight or controlled eating.

- The information in this pamphlet is still suitable; however, you may also need to offer healthy foods that are higher in energy (calories) more often. This includes things such as peanut butter, full-fat cheese, eggs, whole milk, and milkshakes.

Fast growth

- Don't worry! Some kids grow wider first and then stretch tall over time.
- If your child is gaining weight too quickly, the goal is to slow down weight gain. But it is important that growth in height continues normally.
- Children that are overweight are more likely to become overweight adults. Both adults and children carrying extra weight are at risk for health problems such as diabetes, high cholesterol, high blood pressure, and joint issues.
- Follow the healthy eating guides in this booklet. Encourage healthy eating habits by offering healthy choices. Be a role model by eating healthily yourself.
- Encourage your child to be active by following the advice in this booklet. Participate in activity with your child for fun, not for weight management.
- **Do not put a child on a weight loss diet. Severe exercise programs for your child are not advised.**
- Children who are overweight often have a more negative body image and higher risk of developing eating disorders. Media messages and comments from peers and others sometimes play a part in this. It is important to help them accept their body shape. Read on to learn more about fostering healthy body image.



Boosting body image

Body image is what you think you look like and how you feel about yourself. The best way to teach your child about a healthy body image is to be a good role model and take care of yourself.

To encourage a child to have a positive body image, we need to teach them how to look after their body. This means:

- H** Handle stress
- E** Eat healthy foods
- L** Live actively
- P** Play and have fun
- I** Invest in sharing and communicating effectively
- N** Nurturing caring relationships
- G** Get enough sleep and rest

Other ways to help boost body image

- Remind your child that people come in all sorts of shapes and sizes and normal change includes weight gain and out-of-proportion growth.
- Accept your child the way they are and avoid making critical comments about their body, or the way they look.
- Be aware of the indirect messages you send. Take care not to criticize your own body. Watch what you say about the way other people look.
- Help your child feel wanted, valued and loved.
- Celebrate your child's unique personality and focus on their strengths and abilities, not physical appearance.
- Help your child develop their particular skills and interests. Encourage hobbies, friendships, and activities.



- Find an activity your whole family enjoys. Being physically active is one of the best ways of developing a positive body image.
- Help your child develop skills to deal with teasing and bullying. Explain that teasing about appearance is not okay. For more information visit www.bullyfreealberta.ca.
- Show your child you think healthy eating and active living is important in order to be healthy – not just to influence weight.
- Teach kids to think critically about what they see and hear, talk with your child about unrealistic images and messages.
- Show your child role models that reflect a realistic standard.





Resources for More Information

Local Contacts

For information and resources about health, active living or nutrition, contact these Alberta resources:

- **Active Edmonton**
www.activeedmonton.ca
- **Alberta Centre for Active Living**
www.centre4activeliving.ca
- **Alberta Health and Wellness**
www.health.gov.ab.ca
- **Alberta Sport, Recreation, Parks and Wildlife Foundation**
www.cd.gov.ab.ca/asrpwf
- **Be Fit for Life Network**
www.befitforlife.ca
- **Boys and Girls Clubs of Alberta**
www.bgcalberta.com/
- **Ever Active Schools**
www.everactive.org
- **Growing Food Security in Alberta**
www.foodsecurityalberta.ca
- **Healthy U** www.healthyalberta.com
- **Health Link Alberta** www.healthlinkalberta.ca
Edmonton, call 408-LINK (5465)
Calgary, call 943-LINK (5465)
Outside the Edmonton and Calgary region,
call toll-free 1-866-408-LINK (5465)
- **Go2 Calgary** www.go2calgary.com
- **Inform Alberta** www.informalberta.ca
- **Kidsport Alberta** www.kidsport.ab.ca
- **Regional Health Authority Offices**
www.health.alberta.ca
Specific phone numbers are listed in phone books

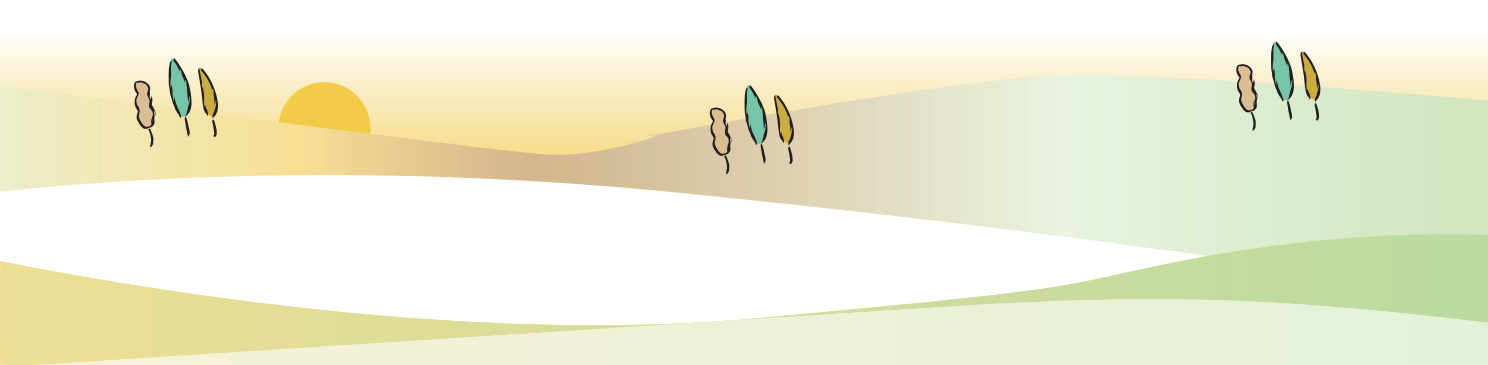
Books

- **500 Five Minute Games – Quick and Easy Activities for 3 – 6 year olds**, Jackie Silberg, 1995.
- **Better Food for Kids: Your Essential Guide to Nutrition for All Children from Age 2 to 6**, Joanne Saab, Daina Kalnins, 2002.
- **Child of Mine: Feeding with Love and Good Sense**, Ellyn Satter, 2000.
- **Deceptively Delicious: Simple Secrets to Get Your Kids Eating Good Food**, Jessica Seinfeld, 2007.
- **Experiences in Movement. Birth to Age 8**, 3rd edition, Rae Pica, 2004.
- **Hip Hop Happy! Adventures in Physical Activity for 3 – 5 Year Olds**, Mary Campbell, 2001.
- **How to Teach Nutrition to Kids**, Connie Liakos Evers, 2003.
- **Quick Meals for Healthy Kids and Busy Parents: Wholesome Family Recipes in 30 Minutes or Less From Three Leading Child Nutrition Experts**, Sandra K. Nissenberg, Margaret L. Bogle, Audrey C. Wright.
- **Raising Happy, Healthy Weight-wise Kids**, Judy Toews and Nicole Parton, 2001.
- **Real Kids Come in All Sizes: Ten Essential Lessons to Build Your Child's Body Esteem**, Kathy Kater, 2004.
- **Secrets of Feeding a Healthy Family**, Ellyn Satter, 1999.
- **Your Active Child: How to Boost Physical, Emotional and Cognitive Development Through Age Appropriate Activity**, Rae Pica, 2003.
- **Your Child's Weight...Helping Without Harming**, Ellyn Satter, 2005.
- **Wiggle, Giggle and Shake: 200 Ways to Move and Learn**, Rae Pica, 2001.



Websites

- **Active Healthy Kids Canada**
www.activehealthykids.ca
- **Anaphylaxis Canada**
www.anaphylaxis.ca
- **Canada's Food Guide for Children**
www.hc-sc.gc.ca/fn-an/food-guide-aliment/index_e.html
- **Canadian Paediatric Society**
www.cps.ca
- **Canadian Parks and Recreation Association**
www.cpra.ca
- **Canadian Partnership for Consumer Food Safety Education**
www.canfightbac.org
- **Canadian Tire "Jumpstart" Program**
www.canadiantire.ca/jumpstart/
- **Child and Family Canada**
www.cfc-efc.ca
- **Children's Fitness Tax Credit**
Canada Revenue Agency:
www.cra-arc.gc.ca/fitness or call
1-800-387-1193.
- **Dietitians of Canada**
www.dietitians.ca
- **Food Allergy Network**
www.foodallergy.org
- **Food Safety Information Line**
www.foodsafetyline.org
- **Health Canada**
www.hc-sc.gc.ca
- **Healthy Eating is in Store for You**
www.healthyeatinginstore.ca
- **Physical Activity Guides for Children and Youth** www.phac-aspc.gc.ca/pau-uap/paguide/child_youth/index.html
- **Public Health Agency of Canada**
www.phac-aspc.gc.ca
- **Vegetarian Resource Group**
www.vrg.org



Acknowledgements

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