

Growth above the 90th percentile weight for height results when food intake exceeds the daily energy requirements for the child. Foods, in particular sweets, can often be misused as a behavioral reward. Over time, these foods will add up to extra pounds. Well-intentioned and loving parents sometimes overfeed their children. A child may also eat more because of habit or the availability of food. The health consequences of such eating patterns in a child are serious. Avoiding it is an important responsibility of parents.

NORMAL STAGES OF FEEDING FOR A PRE-SCHOOL CHILD

Physical

Nutritional

3 – 4 years

Appetite declines with picky food habits.

Slow steady weight gain

Child is usually assertive of independence.

5 – 6 years

Rate of growth stabilizes along with appetite.

Steady average weight gain of 6 – 7 ½ lbs./year and height gain of 6 cm/year or 2 – 2 ½ in. per year.

Children like to be involved in food-related activities.

RECOMMENDED FOOD INTAKE FOR PRE-SCHOOL AGE CHILDREN

Food Groups

Servings Per Day

Average Serving Size

Milk and Milk
Cheese

Minimum 3

¾ cup of milk; 1 ½ oz.
cheese

Lean Meats, Eggs, Fish
Poultry
Peanut Butter
Legumes
Nuts

2

1 ½ - 2 oz.; ¾ - 1 egg
3 Tbsp.
3/8 - 1/2 cup
1 – ½ oz.

Bread/Bread Alternatives
Ready-to-Eat Cereals
Cooked Cereals (Rice,
Pasta, Spaghetti, Macaroni)

4

¾ - 1 slice
¾ - 1 oz.
1/3 – ½ cup

Fruits and Vegetables
Vitamin C Source- Orange,
Strawberries, Cantaloupe,
Grapefruit
Vitamin A Source-
(Dark green leafy vegetables-

Minimum 4

¼ cup juice

2

3 – 5 Tbsp.

spinach, collard greens, kale, turnip greens), peaches, apricots, broccoli, pumpkin, squash, carrots, sweet potato	1 Every Other Day	3 – 5 Tbsp.
Other Fruits and Vegetables	2 – 3	3 – 5 Tbsp.
Fats, Oils, Margarine	3	1 tsp.

WHAT YOU CAN DO FOR YOUR CHILD

1. Limit the food intake to slow further weight gain. Serve smaller portions of lean meat and gravies. Use fresh or water-packed fruits. Limit or avoid fatty meats. Gravies, fried foods, and fatty desserts. Substitute non-fat or 1% milk instead of using whole milk. Encourage drinking water instead of soda.
2. Encourage physical activity geared to child's capacity. This will not only increase energy expenditure, but also provide good exercise experiences.
3. Avoid using food as a reward. A sticker or gold star is well received by most children.
4. Snacks are needed for small children as a supplement to their meals. Substitute high calorie snacks with low calorie ones. Some examples of such snacks are:

Cereals & Grains

Whole grain breads
Breakfast cereal (no sugar)
Rice/whole grain cakes
Air-popped popcorn
Whole grain baked crackers
Unsalted pretzels

Vegetables

Carrots/celery sticks
Cauliflower buds
Broccoli flowerets
Green pepper rings
Tomato wedges
Cucumber slices

Fruits

Apple/orange slices
Peaches/pears
Banana/apricots
Plums/prunes
Grapefruit

Other

Non-fat yogurt
Low fat cheese
Skim milk
Fruitsicles
Popsicles

You can mix and match any of these items to make your own creations, and you can involve your children in preparing these foods. For example, fruit and yogurt, or cheese and crackers, etc.