

Super 4 Kids!

PLANNING MENUS FOR KIDS IS CHALLENGING – especially since they eat four or five times a day.

It is easy to fall into a food rut and feed them the same foods day in and day out. My weekday morning routine involves standing in front of the refrigerator and freezer (before I've had my first cup of coffee) doing the mental gymnastics of planning out my daughter's meals for the day: *What do we have to offer? What did we feed her yesterday? Which fresh foods need to be eaten today? Are there at least three different colors in each meal?*

As a registered dietitian and the mother of a toddler, I know all of the factors that should be taken into consideration when planning meals for kids. I want to help you build your feeding toolkit with knowledge about good nutrition for kids, an understanding of positive feeding practices and concrete recommendations for what to feed your kids.

I have scoured the aisles in search of nutritious foods that both are appropriate for kids to eat daily and can help them meet their nutritional needs. Pick up my "Super 4 Kids" shopping list and look for shelf tags throughout the store. Of course, the foods I chose are individual foods, but how you combine them with other foods is still important since there is no such thing as a "perfect food." The remainder of this newsletter will focus on how to feed kids ages two through 12 healthfully (and the specific foods that I recommend).

How to Feed Children

Before I delve into what to feed kids, I want to touch on how to feed them. Establishing a good feeding rapport with your child can help them have a healthy relationship with food. A healthy relationship with food entails eating a wide variety of foods, even those that aren't favorites; coming to the table



ready to eat; having good table manners; and being in touch with feelings of hunger and satiety. Avoid food fights at mealtimes by practicing Ellyn Satter's Division of Responsibility with your children:

It is up to the parent or caregiver to decide what, when and where kids eat and it is up to the child to decide whether and how much to eat.

In order to raise competent eaters, you must establish trust in your feeding relationship. Trust yourself to know what foods your child needs to be healthy (I'll cover that in the next section), help your child trust you by respecting the amount they want to eat and by being interested in their eating (but not over- or under-involved), and help your child build good self-esteem in all areas so that they will come to the table feeling both confident that they know how much or how little food they need and competent in their ability to feed themselves. Finally, family meals are one of the most important ways to ensure that your child's diet is optimal.

Try to eat at least one meal a day together as a family.

Nutrition For Kids

Ideally, your kids should eat the same things you eat; they don't need "special" foods. Let's face it, though – we all have room for improvement in our diets (I wouldn't want my daughter to eat as much chocolate as I do every day). The phrase "you are what you eat" has never rung more true than it does with growing children, when the components of the foods they eat are literally incorporated into their bodies as they grow. In general, an overall healthful eating pattern that includes a variety of whole foods at each meal should be your primary goal.

In talking to other parents about what they feed their kids, I have realized that kids are being fed a lot of processed foods, a lot of special "kid foods" (like chicken nuggets and hot dogs), and not enough vegetables. You and your children should be eating mostly minimally



Gelson's Registered Dietitian, Jessica Siegel, has a Masters in Public Health. However, she is not a doctor and her nutritional recommendations are not tailored to specific health problems. Consult your physician before beginning any nutritional program. To contact Jessica, please call her at 1-800-GELSONS.

Features in this Issue

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FEEDING GUIDE FOR CHILDREN AGES 2-12

Food Category	Daily Recommended Amount			
	2-3 Years	4-8 Years	9-12 Years Girls	9-12 Years Boys
Vegetables	1 cup	1½ cups	2 cups	2½ cups
Fruit	1 cup	1-1½ cups	1½ cups	1½ cups
Grains	3 ounces	4-5 ounces	5 ounces	6 ounces
Dairy	2 cups	2 cups	3 cups	3 cups
Protein	2 ounces	3-4 ounces	5 ounces	5 ounces
Fats	3 teaspoons	4 teaspoons	5 teaspoons	5 teaspoons
Discretionary Calories (kcal)*	165-170 kcal	170-195 kcal	130-290 kcal	195-410 kcal
Total Calories (kcal)*	1,000-1,400 kcal	1,200-1,800 kcal	1,600-2,200 kcal	1,800-2,600 kcal
Sodium Limit**	1,500 milligrams	1,900 milligrams	2,200 milligrams	2,200 milligrams
Fiber	19 grams	25 grams	26 grams	31 grams
Saturated Fat Limit***	11-16 grams	13-20 grams	18-24 grams	20-29 grams

*Discretionary calorie and total calorie range depend on physical activity level and sex. The lower range of calories is for children who are moderately active for up to 30 minutes a day and the higher end of the calorie range is for children who are very physically active for at least 60 minutes a day. Discretionary calories in foods with labels are listed as “calories from fat.” In foods with added sugars, calculate the discretionary calories by multiplying the number of grams of sugar listed on the Nutrition Facts panel by 4 and add those calories to any calories from fat that are listed.

**Sodium upper limits are listed. This is not a goal amount but a number that should not be exceeded. It is best to keep sodium below this upper limit.

***Saturated fat limit is based on 10% of total calories. A range is given in accordance with the calorie range for different ages, sexes and activity levels.

processed foods like vegetables, fruit, whole intact grains (think oatmeal instead of cereal made with oat flour), low-fat and nonfat plain dairy products, fish, poultry and beans. Diets rich in processed foods put everyone at risk for heart disease, type 2 diabetes and obesity—yes, even children can have early signs of heart disease and a shockingly high number already have type 2 diabetes. Highly processed foods are often nutrient-poor (even those that are vitamin fortified), calorie-rich and high in unhealthy sodium, saturated fats, trans fats and refined carbohydrates, like high-fructose corn syrup and flour. Whole, minimally processed foods are more nutritious, naturally lower in sodium and less calorie-dense than processed foods. Most of the foods that you and your children eat should not come in packages or have nutrition labels; they should be minimally processed, whole foods that you combine or cook to create meals. I don't expect you to cook every meal from scratch, but try to use processed foods strategically and seek out the most healthful options. Please use the following criteria when buying packaged foods:

1 Always read the ingredient lists first. Choose foods that have the fewest ingredients. Five ingredients is a good limit, within reason (a multi-grain cereal might have five different grains, so allow room for other necessary ingredients).

2 Avoid foods with ingredients that you wouldn't have in your own kitchen. These are usually additives, preservatives, artificial colors, artificial flavors, fillers and other not-so healthful chemicals. Especially try to exclude high-


fructose corn syrup, partially hydrogenated oils and artificial sweeteners.

3 Set a limit on sodium. A child between the ages of 4 and 8 should have no more than 1,900 milligrams of sodium a day. That breaks down to about 550 milligrams for each of three meals and 125 milligrams for each of two snacks. If you are buying a food or a beverage that will be a component of a meal but not comprise the entire meal, figure that one item should not exceed 200 milligrams of sodium. Be aware that it adds up quickly: most bread has between 120–200 milligrams of sodium per slice, a glass of milk has about 100 milligrams of sodium and a cup of *Cheerios* has 160 milligrams of sodium.

4 Watch out for added sugars. It is okay if some of the foods you buy have a little bit of added sugar, but avoid foods with any form of sugar listed as one of the first three ingredients (ingredients are listed in descending order of quantity on packages).

Making sure that your child has a balanced diet means incorporating different categories of foods at each meal so that at the end of the day your child has more or less eaten the target number of servings from each food group for their age (see Feeding Guide for Children Ages 2–12).

What to Feed

 **Vegetables.** This is the category that most children and adults grapple with the most. Kids sense your strained relationship with produce and react by rejecting their veggies. It is important to remain neutral about vegetables (and all other foods); don't

express too much enthusiasm or any trace of disgust. Children will eat vegetables, but they have to see you eating and enjoying them, too. Please keep in mind that children need at least ten exposures to a food before they really assimilate it into their diets, so don't be too quick to decide that they don't like a certain food. Vegetables are an essential part of a healthful diet because they help prevent chronic diseases, contribute important nutrients and fiber that are essential to growth, development and a healthy immune system, and are low in calories (eating more vegetables lowers the risk of overweight and obesity). Sadly, only about 15% of children eat their recommended number of servings of vegetables.

Offer your kids at least one or two vegetables at lunch and dinner (or breakfast if your child prefers savory foods in the morning) and incorporate them into snacks. Vary the colors so that the plate looks appetizing and try to include at least one green and one orange vegetable a day. Additionally, offer one cabbage-family vegetable (broccoli, cauliflower, cabbage, Brussels sprouts) every day or two. Cooking fresh vegetables is an excellent strategy, but using frozen vegetables is equally as good and I think it makes it more likely that you will achieve the variety and number of servings kids need, due to the convenience of being able to have them ready in a matter of seconds. I use a combination of fresh vegetables that I cook in large batches and freeze myself and store-bought frozen vegetables. Raw vegetables, such as tomatoes, avocados, carrots and sugar snap peas, are also convenient and delicious veggie options.

✓ **Fruit.** Since we are born with a preference for sweet flavors, most kids like fruit. Try to offer younger children at least two different fruits a day and older children three different varieties a day. Fresh, dried and frozen fruit and 100% fruit juice count as fruit, but I don't advise that most children drink juice on a daily basis since it is a concentrated source of sugar and calories and it lacks the fiber and satisfaction that fresh fruit offers. I usually like to add fresh fruit to meals, but I keep frozen and dried fruit on hand, as well, especially in the winter when fresh fruit choices are limited. I stir defrosted frozen fruit into plain yogurt, add frozen blueberries to oatmeal and cook dried fruit with grits.

With fruit and vegetables, different colors signify different nutrients, so it is important to eat a rainbow of colors from these two food groups. Not only does this ensure that kids will get all the nutrients they need, it also helps to make for a prettier, more enticing plate. Encourage kids to try new fruits and vegetables by making a game of eating a rainbow, planting a garden, allowing them to choose a new produce item each week at the market, bringing them into the kitchen to help you prepare food and eating meals together as a family.

✓ **Grains & Starches.** Whole grains are a child's main source of long-lasting energy that allows them to grow, play and work. They also provide important fiber and nutrients that help reduce the risk of constipation, high cholesterol, diabetes and certain cancers. Intact whole grains are very filling, so they assist in calorie control, which is important for maintaining a healthy weight. Unfortunately, children (and adults) are getting too many of their calories from low-quality carbohydrates in the form of refined grains such as bread, pizza, tortillas, sugary cereals, chips, white rice, crackers, cookies, cakes and other dough-based products. As a family, try to switch to minimally processed intact whole grains (and minimize products made from flour) by switching to oats, brown rice,

flourless sprouted whole grain bread, barley and quinoa. Starchy vegetables such as corn, peas and potatoes (preferably baby potatoes) also count as a whole grain, and whole-grain pasta is a special exception in this group. Buying frozen cooked quinoa, brown rice, corn and peas is one of my favorite ways to save time when preparing meals. I also keep cooked steel cut oatmeal and *Food for Life* sprouted flourless wholegrain breads in the freezer (their cinnamon raisin bread is my daughter's favorite).

Depending on your child's age and activity level (older and more active children need more carbs), offer one to two servings of whole grains at each meal. They can be the same grain at each meal (for example, two slices of bread for a sandwich or one cup of cooked oatmeal), but try to serve a variety of at least three different whole grains a day.

Start to feed your child whole grains as early as possible so that making the transition to "brown" will be easier. Whole grain foods have different colors, textures and flavors than refined grain foods, and some children have a difficult time accepting these differences. Remember the "ten exposure" rule of acceptance and try to make eating whole grains a family project.

✓ **Dairy.** Dairy products help to build strong bones and supply protein to a growing child's diet. Surprisingly, it is easy to reach or exceed the recommended daily amount, especially for younger children who only need two cups a day. I prefer to include a variety of foods from this group rather than just offering glass upon glass of milk. (Water should really be everyone's primary beverage.) Plain low-fat or nonfat active cultured yogurt is an excellent food that has the added benefit of promoting

SERVING SIZE GUIDE

Food Category & Serving Unit	Serving Size Equivalents	
Vegetables 1 cup	1 cup cooked or raw vegetables	¼ small avocado
	12 baby or 2 medium carrots	2 cups raw salad leaves & greens (except cabbage)
Fruit 1 cup	1 large whole apple, pear, peach, orange or banana	1 cup cut fruit
	2 medium plums or apricots	½ cup dried fruit
	8 large strawberries	6 ounces 100% fruit juice
	32 seedless grapes	
Grains & Starches 1 ounce	½ cup cooked rice, pasta, cereal, quinoa, barley, cornmeal or oatmeal	1 mini or ¼ large bagel
	1 slice or piece (28 grams) of bread, tortilla or English muffin, or ½ bun	1 ounce of crackers
	28 grams (usually ½-1 cup) dry ready-to-eat cereal	1 small or 1 cup mashed potato, or 20 French fries
	¼ cup granola or muesli	8-inch ear or 1 cup corn
Dairy 1 cup	1 cup (8 ounces) milk or yogurt	2 cups cottage cheese
	1 ½ ounces cheese	
Protein 1 ounce	1 ounce chicken, fish or meat	½ ounce (about 2 tablespoons) nuts or seeds
	1 item eggs	1 tablespoon nut butters
	¼ cup cooked dry beans, legumes or peas (including tofu and edamame)	
Fats 1 teaspoon	1 teaspoon liquid oils, butter or mayonnaise	8 large olives
	1 teaspoon salad dressing	⅓ ounce nuts or seeds
	¼ small avocado	½ tablespoon nut butters
Discretionary Foods 50 calories	4 ounces soft drink, soda or juice	9 ounces 2% milk
	2 medium cookies	6 ounces whole milk
	5-10 chips	1 tablespoon cream cheese or whipped cream
	1 small (2 ounces) muffin	¾ ounce full-fat cheese
	½ medium croissant	1½ teaspoon butter
	2½ ounces cooked 80% lean ground beef	½ cup fruited low fat yogurt
	1 ounce beef or pork sausage	¼ cup ice cream

digestive health and boosting immunity with its probiotic content. Cheese also fits the bill.

Organic dairy products are preferable to reduce exposure to residues from any antibiotics or hormones cows may have been administered. I also like dairy products that come from animals that eat grass, since they can contain some omega-3 fatty acids, which are important for brain and heart health. Be careful to emphasize low-fat and nonfat milk and yogurt and reduced-fat or hard full-fat cheeses so that children do not exceed their saturated fat limits. If your child does not like or tolerate dairy products, other food sources of calcium include: calcium-fortified milk alternatives and orange juice, canned sardines and salmon with bones, dark leafy green vegetables (kale, broccoli, collard greens, spinach), white beans, dried figs, almonds and some calcium-fortified cereals. These foods contain some calcium but not the same amount as dairy products, so keep track of calcium contents when meeting calcium needs with non-dairy foods.

✓ **Protein.** Lean proteins from plant and animal sources are the building blocks of healthy muscles, bones, skin and blood. However, our protein requirements are not very high and most Americans easily exceed their goals since most foods contain at least some protein. It is important to expose children to plant sources of protein, such as beans, legumes, tofu, nuts, nut butters and seeds, because these are some of the most healthful forms of proteins in terms of disease prevention and weight control. (Even though nuts are high in fat, they contain mostly healthful fats and, when portion sizes are adhered to, they should not contribute excessive amounts of calories.) Poultry, especially iron-rich skinless dark meat, is a good option several times a week. Red meat, including beef, pork and lamb, should be served up to once a week. Organic omega-3 fortified eggs are also an excellent way to add protein and other brain-building nutrients to kids' diets. Fish contains important omega-3 fatty acids, but it must be a limited source of protein: try to serve a variety, observe limits on servings and keep in mind that some is better than none. If your child doesn't

eat any tuna (some varieties are OK), then they can eat up to two servings (six ounces) each week of low-mercury fish and seafood, such as shrimp, wild Alaskan salmon, black cod, pollock, sardines, anchovies, scallops, mahi mahi, tilapia, black seabass and crab. A good resource for understanding fish recommendations for kids is the KidSafe Seafood site Best Choices List at www.kidsafeseafood.org.

Try to serve animal protein at one meal a day and vegetarian proteins at the other meals (including dairy products and eggs). Of course, cooking fresh organic proteins for family meals is everyone's preferred way to serve protein, but it is not always a realistic option. When you do cook, try to double the recipe and freeze what is left over for another meal. As an alternative to the fresh, cooked-from-scratch protein, I soak and cook beans myself (cooked beans, split peas and lentils freeze beautifully in individual and large portions) and freeze pre-portioned slices of preservative-free, no-salt added turkey breast and homemade soups. Canned beans, wild salmon and tuna (*Rincon Gold* and *Wild Planet* brands are low in mercury) are also great protein options. Additionally, the freezer section at Gelson's offers many wonderful choices for protein, including turkey burgers, salmon burgers and edamame. I also keep hardboiled eggs on hand to serve whole or grate into egg salad. Be wary of cold cuts and other processed meats like hot dogs and sausages because they can contain excessive amounts of sodium (as well as nitrates and other undesirable preservatives). A good salt limit for these types of items is 180 milligrams of sodium per ounce.

✓ **Fats.** The best sources of fat for children and adults are extra virgin first cold pressed olive oil, avocado, nuts, seeds and fatty fish. These should be the primary fats in your family's diet since they promote health and lower the risk of heart disease and certain cancers. However, if you find that your kids are eating a lot of processed foods and restaurant meals, then they probably are not getting the right balance of fats in their diet (soybean oil and other inexpensive oils are usually used in processed and prepared foods).

Olive oil should be the main fat that you use for cooking, though canola oil is an acceptable substitute for certain recipes that

require high heat or a neutral-flavored oil. Use butter in moderation (remember that it counts towards the saturated fat limit) and margarines infrequently. Make salad dressing with olive oil and vinegar or seek out prepared dressings that are made with olive or canola oils. Nuts, especially walnuts, and seeds make wonderful snacks when paired with a fresh or dried fruit. Spread almond butter on toast, celery and carrots. (I prefer almond butter to peanut butter since it has more healthful monounsaturated fats.) Add avocado to salads and sandwiches. Seek out fatty fish such as wild Alaskan salmon, canned light tuna (see brand recommendations at left), black cod, sardines, Atlantic mackerel and Atlantic herring.

✓ **Discretionary Calories.**

Discretionary calories are basically the calories kids get from non-nutritious foods (a.k.a. "junk foods") and the calories from fat and added sugars in prepared foods. These calories allow for a cushion above and beyond those calories allotted for meeting the daily recommended amounts for all of the food categories. This cushion can be used for treat foods (like *Pirate's Booty*), condiments (like syrup, mayonnaise and salad dressing), caloric beverages, or even extra servings from one of the food groups discussed above. My daughter, for example, loves poached chicken thighs and easily eats three ounces at a time even though she only needs two ounces from the protein group a day (the extra ounce counts toward her discretionary calorie allowance).

It is important to offer treats occasionally as a way to teach children how to handle "forbidden" foods responsibly. Include fatty foods like chips or fries at the occasional meal and let children eat as much as they want. Offer a single serving of dessert with meals sometimes and serve cookies or chips for a snack every few weeks. Giving some limited access to "forbidden" foods will help children learn to appreciate them but not overindulge in them. Always keep in mind that the ultimate goal with feeding children is not just to get them to eat their vegetables at dinner tonight, but to help them become competent eaters who will eat their vegetables for the rest of their lives.

Please visit www.gelsons.com for my September Super 4 Kids store visits schedule.

