

## Ages 2–3 Years

Two to three-year-olds have uneven appetites. It is normal for them to eat very little one day, then a large amount the next day.



### Meal Tips

- Make mealtime an enjoyable experience. Avoid criticism and power struggles over food.
- If your child is a picky eater or refuses to eat, continue to offer healthy snacks.
- Ask your medical professional about giving your child a multivitamin and mineral supplement.
- Offer three well-balanced meals and snacks as needed.
- Encourage a variety of foods, but do not panic if your child insists on eating only certain foods.
- Serve fresh fruit instead of fruit juices and fruit drinks.
- Serve portions on smaller plates.
- Read food labels.
- Use low-fat cooking methods: bake, broil, grill, steam, or poach. Use healthy fats (canola or olive oil) in cooking and remove chicken or turkey skin before serving.
- Do not force your child to finish all of the food on the plate.
- Limit “junk foods,” such as soda, chips, cookies, candy, and fast food.
- Children under age 4 can choke on foods such as hot dogs, popcorn, nuts, raw carrots, grapes, and hard candy.

### Physical Activity for 2 to 3 Year-Olds

Help your child develop healthy habits:



- Limit TV to no more than one hour per day. Do not put a TV in your child’s bedroom.
- Be a role model and play with your child at least one hour a day. Toddlers like to play with balls and push toys, dance, and follow the leader.
- Two to three-year-olds have short attention spans. Do not worry if your child is tired of playing a game within a few minutes.

#### References:

American Heart Association, et al. Dietary Recommendations for Children and Adolescents: A Guide for Practitioners. *Pediatrics* 2006, 117, 544-559.

Cooper, Kenneth. *Fit Kids*. Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 1999.

Mahan, L. Kathleen, and Escott-Stump, Sylvia. *Krause’s Food, Nutrition and Diet Therapy*. Philadelphia: W. B. Saunders, 2004.

## Age-Appropriate Serving Sizes

### Milk Serving Sizes (4 servings/day)

Cheese	1/2 oz.
Yogurt	1/2 cup
Milk	1/2 cup (4 oz.)

(1 percent or fat-free after age 2)



### Meat Serving Sizes (2 oz/day)

Beans	1/4 cup (1 oz.)
Beef, poultry, fish (cooked)	2 tbsp. (1/2 oz.)
Egg whites	2 (1 oz.)
Egg	1 (1 oz.)
Natural Peanut butter	1 tbsp. (1 oz)



### Grain Serving Sizes (3 or more servings/day)

Bagel	1/4
Bread	1 slice
Cereal, cold	3/4 cup
Cereal, cooked	1/2 cup
Crackers, graham	3
Crackers, saltine	6
Pasta, cooked	1/3 cup
Rice, cooked	1/3 cup
Tortilla, corn	1



**Offer whole-grain foods every day**  
(e.g.- oatmeal, whole wheat bread,  
brown rice)

### Vegetable Serving Sizes (4 or more servings/day)

Cooked vegetables 2–3 tbsp. (1/4 cup)



### Fruit Serving Sizes (4 servings/day)

Fresh fruit 1/4 small  
Canned fruit,  
no sugar added 2–3 tbsp. (1/4 cup)



### Fat Serving Sizes (2–3 servings/day)

Avocado, small 2 tbsp.  
Cream cheese 1 tbsp.  
Margarine, soft 1 tsp.  
Mayonnaise 1 tsp.  
Salad dressing 1 tbsp.  
Sour cream 1 tbsp.

A simple way to remember the serving sizes for 2- to 3-year-olds is to offer 1 tablespoon of food per year of age from each food group at each meal. For example, a 2-year-old needs 2 tablespoons of rice or pasta, 2 tablespoons of poultry or fish, 2 tablespoons of vegetables, and 2 tablespoons of fruit.

Encourage children to drink water. Children should not quench their thirst with soda pop, fruit drinks, or fruit juices.

Depending on their amount of physical activity, children may eat more or less than the recommended amount of food in the sample well-balanced diet.

## Sample Well-Balanced Diet: Ages 2 to 3 Years

Breakfast	Morning Snack	Lunch	Afternoon Snack	Dinner	Bedtime Snack
<p>1/2 cup low sugar cereal</p> <p>1/4 cup canned peaches</p> <p>1/2 cup milk (1 percent or fat free)</p> <p>1 scrambled egg (scrambled with cooking spray)</p>	<p>1/2 cup milk (1 percent or fat free)</p>	<p>1 slice whole wheat bread</p> <p>1/2 cup cooked broccoli</p> <p>1/2 small orange</p> <p>1/2 cup milk (1 percent or fat free)</p> <p>1 oz. roasted turkey</p> <p>1 tsp. mayonnaise</p>	<p>3/4 oz low-fat cheese</p> <p>1 corn tortilla</p> <p>water</p>	<p>1/3 cup rice</p> <p>1/2 cup cooked spinach</p> <p>1/2 small mango</p> <p>1/2 cup milk (1 percent or fat free)</p> <p>1 chicken leg (skinless)</p> <p>2 tbsp. avocado</p>	<p>Choose healthy snacks as needed</p>

