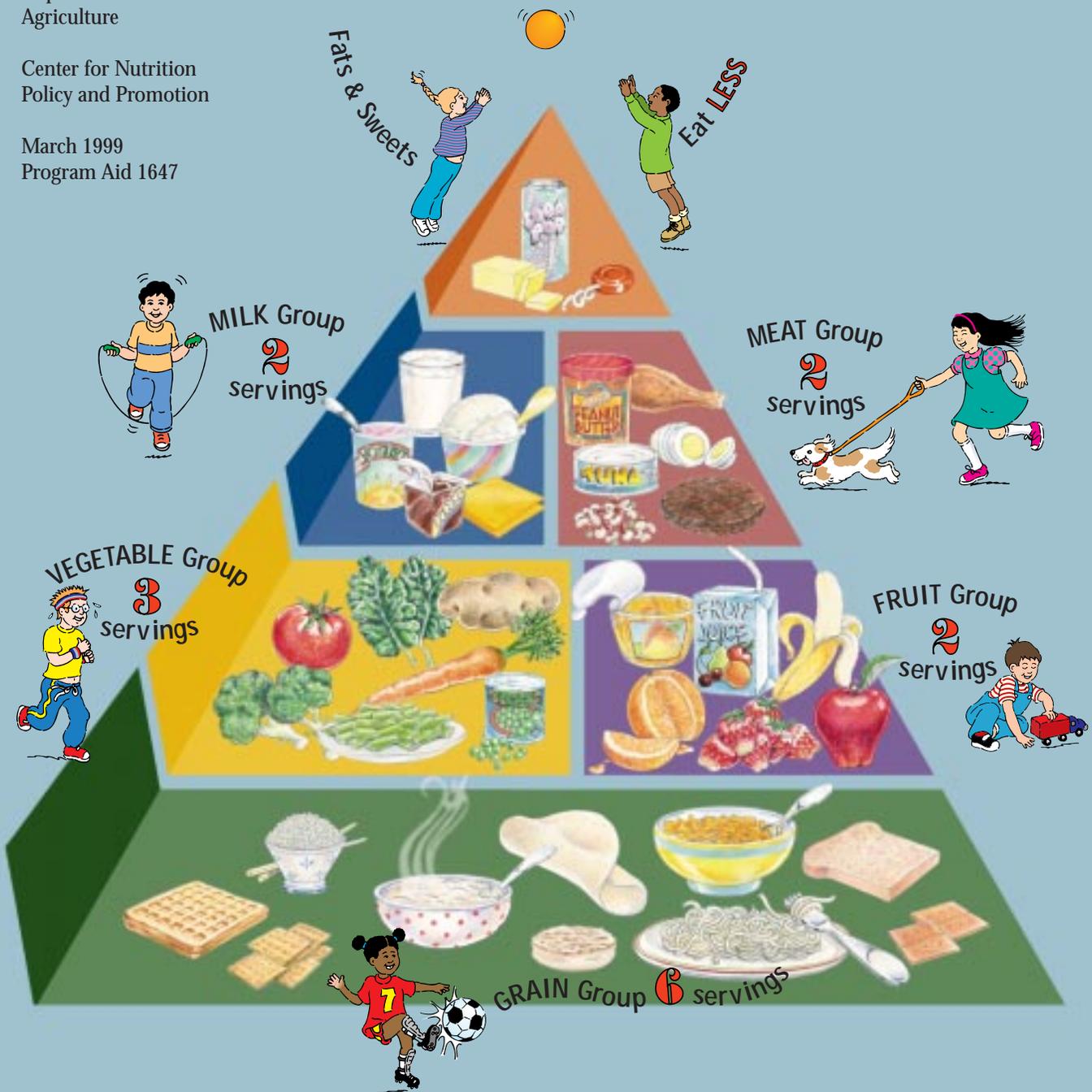


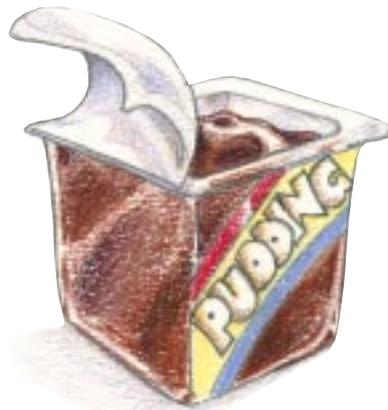
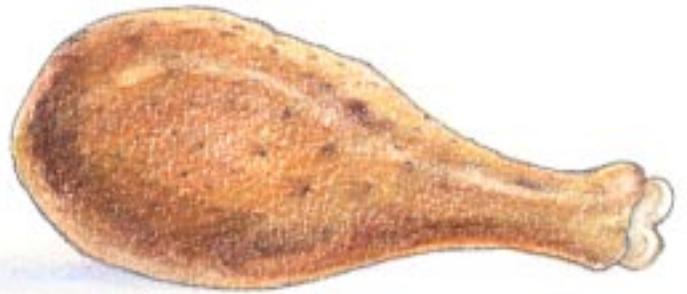
TIPS for Using the FOOD GUIDE PYRAMID for Young Children 2 to 6 years old

United States
Department of
Agriculture

Center for Nutrition
Policy and Promotion

March 1999
Program Aid 1647





How the Food Guide Pyramid has been adapted for young children 2 to 6 years of age...



THE FOOD GUIDE and its healthy eating messages have not changed since the original Food Guide Pyramid was introduced in 1992...just the “picture” is new.

- ☞ Foods are drawn in a realistic style.
- ☞ Foods are those commonly eaten by 2- to 6-year-old children.
- ☞ Foods are in single serving portions, when possible.
- ☞ The food groups have shorter names.
- ☞ The number of servings for food groups is a single number rather than a range.
- ☞ Two- to 3-year-old children need the same numbers of servings as 4- to 6-year-old children but may need smaller portions, about 2/3 of a serving.
- ☞ Two- to 6-year-old children need a total of 2 servings from the milk group each day.
- ☞ The food guide still emphasizes eating a variety of foods.
- ☞ Illustrations of active children show the importance of physical activity.



As parents, you can play a major role in teaching your children how to develop healthful eating habits to last a lifetime. This booklet will help you show your children that food is fun and learning about food is fun, too.

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PYRAMID BASICS

A Guide to Using the Food Guide Pyramid for Young Children



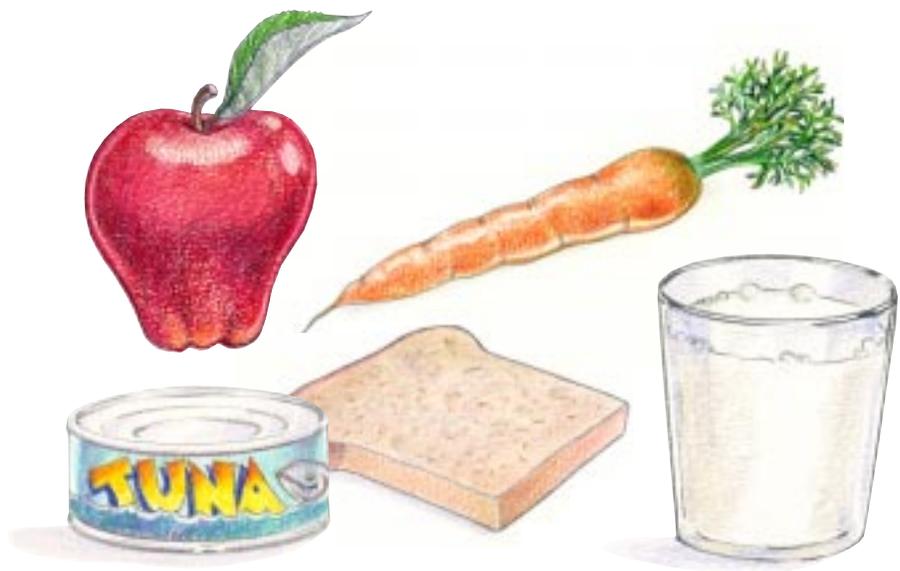
The Food Guide Pyramid adapted for young children focuses on eating a variety of foods. As you increase the variety in your child's diet remember that some fats are necessary for early growth and development. The Dietary Guidelines for Americans suggest that fat in preschoolers' diets be gradually reduced from current levels to the level recommended for most people (no more than 30% of total daily calories) by about 5 years of age.

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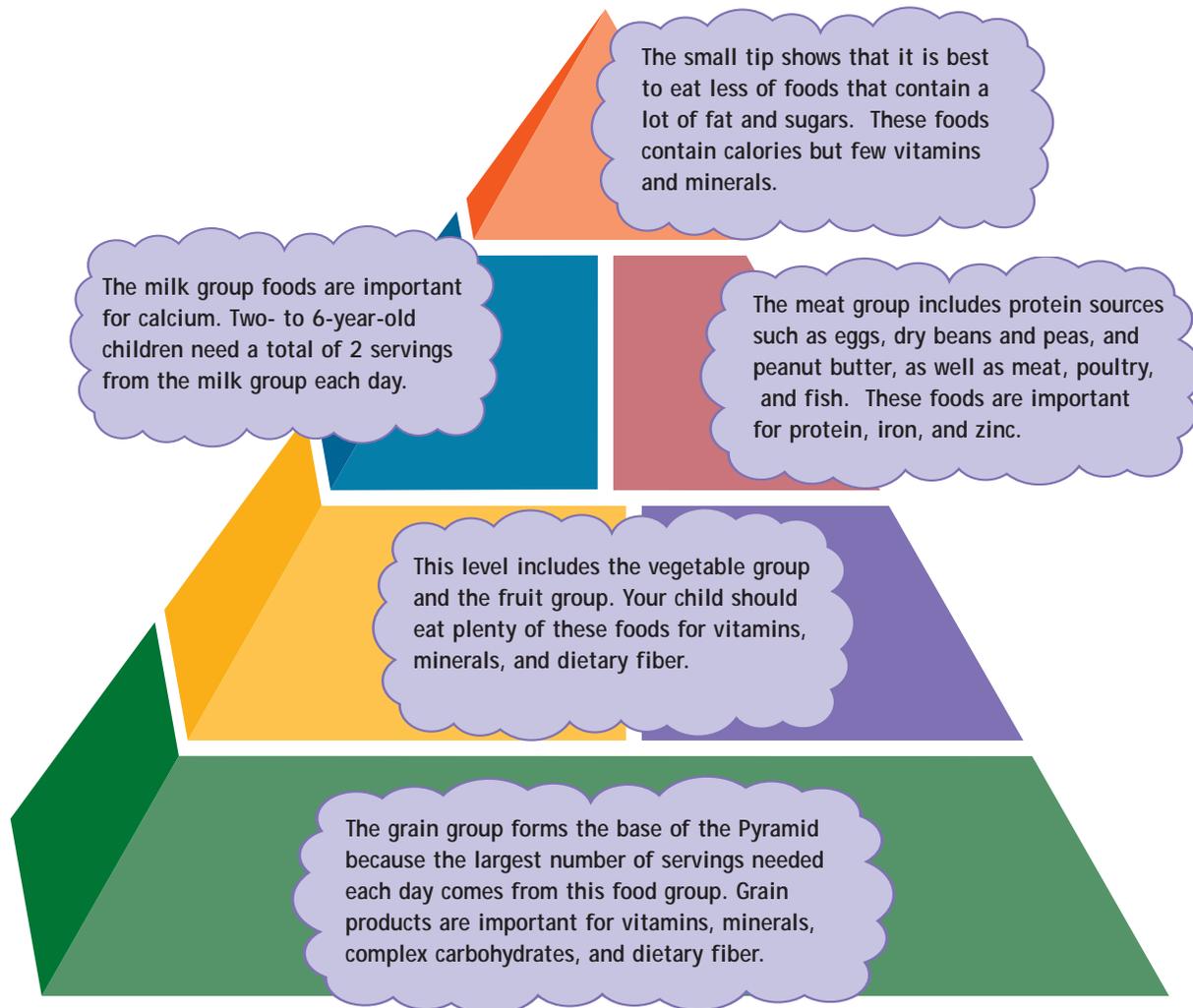
THE FOOD GUIDE PYRAMID shows how everybody can make food choices for a healthful diet as described in the Dietary Guidelines for Americans. A special Food Guide Pyramid was developed to help you teach your preschoolers what to eat to help them grow and stay healthy.

The Pyramid divides food into five major food groups: grains, vegetables, fruits, milk, and meat. The foods shown in the Pyramid are those that many children know and enjoy. Each of these food groups provides some, but not all, of the nutrients and energy children need. No one food group is more important than another. For good health and proper growth, children need to eat a variety of different foods every day.

The small tip of the Pyramid shows fats and sweets. These are foods such as salad dressings, cream, butter, margarine, sugars, soft drinks, and candies. Go easy on these foods because they have a lot of calories from fat and sugars, but few vitamins and minerals.



P Y R A M I D B A S I C S



TODDLER TIPS

ALWAYS watch children during meals and snacks. Young children, ages 2 to 3 especially, are at risk of choking on food and remain at risk until they can chew and swallow better by about age 4. Using the Food Guide Pyramid, offer 2- to 3-year-olds the same variety of foods as the rest of the family, but smaller amounts prepared in forms that are easy for them to chew and swallow.

FOODS THAT MAY CAUSE CHOKING INCLUDE:

frankfurters	nuts and seeds	popcorn	raw carrots
chunks of meat	raisins	marshmallows	peanut butter (spoonful)
chips	whole grapes	pretzels	round or hard candy
raw celery	cherries with pits	large pieces of fruit	

Some childhood favorites can be offered if you just change the form:

- 👉 Cut frankfurters lengthwise into thin strips.
- 👉 Cook carrots or celery until slightly soft, then cut in sticks.
- 👉 Cut grapes or cherries in small pieces.
- 👉 Spread peanut butter thin.

FOOD Guide PYRAMID

for Young Children

A Daily Guide for
2- to 6-Year-Olds



FOOD IS FUN and learning about food is fun, too. Eating foods from the Food Guide Pyramid and being physically active will help you grow healthy and strong.

WHAT COUNTS AS ONE SERVING?

GRAIN GROUP

1 slice of bread
1/2 cup of cooked rice or pasta
1/2 cup of cooked cereal
1 ounce of ready-to-eat cereal

VEGETABLE GROUP

1/2 cup of chopped raw or cooked vegetables
1 cup of raw leafy vegetables

FRUIT GROUP

1 piece of fruit or melon wedge
3/4 cup of juice
1/2 cup of canned fruit
1/4 cup of dried fruit

MILK GROUP

1 cup of milk or yogurt
2 ounces of cheese

MEAT GROUP

2 to 3 ounces of cooked lean meat, poultry, or fish.
1/2 cup of cooked dry beans, or 1 egg counts as 1 ounce of lean meat. 2 tablespoons of peanut butter count as 1 ounce of meat.

FATS AND SWEETS

Limit calories from these.

Four- to 6-year-olds can eat these serving sizes. Offer 2- to 3-year-olds less, except for milk. Two- to 6-year-old children need a total of 2 servings from the milk group each day.

EAT a variety of **FOODS** AND **ENJOY!**

HEALTHY EATING TIPS ...

Encouraging Food Choices for a Healthy Diet



BE PATIENT. Young children may not be interested in trying new foods. Offer a new food more than once. Show your child how the rest of the family enjoys it. The food may be accepted when it becomes more familiar to your child.

BE A PLANNER. Most young children need a snack or two in addition to three regular daily meals.

- ☞ Offer foods from three or more of the five major food groups for breakfast and lunch.
- ☞ Offer foods from four or more of the five major food groups for the “main meal.”
- ☞ Plan snacks so they are not served too close to mealtime, and offer foods from two or more of the five major food groups.

BE A GOOD ROLE MODEL. What you do can mean more than what you say. Your child learns from you about how and what to eat.

- ☞ Eat meals with your children whenever possible.
- ☞ Try new foods and new ways of preparing them with your children. Both you and your children can be healthier by eating more dark-green leafy vegetables, deep-yellow vegetables, fruits, and whole grain products.
- ☞ Walk, run, and play with your children, don't just sit on the sidelines. A family that is physically active together has lots of fun!

BE ADVENTUROUS. At the store ask your young child to choose a new vegetable or fruit, from two or three choices, for a weekly “family try-a-new-food” night. At home your child can help you wash and prepare the food.

BE CREATIVE. Encourage your child to invent a new snack or sandwich from three or four healthful ingredients you provide. Try a new bread or whole grain cracker. Talk about what food groups the new snack includes and why it tastes good. Is the snack smooth, crunchy, sweet, juicy, chewy, or colorful?



When children are offered a balanced diet over time, they will develop good eating habits.

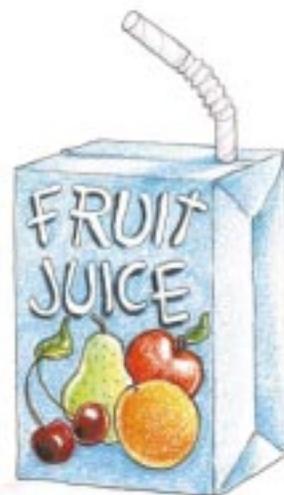
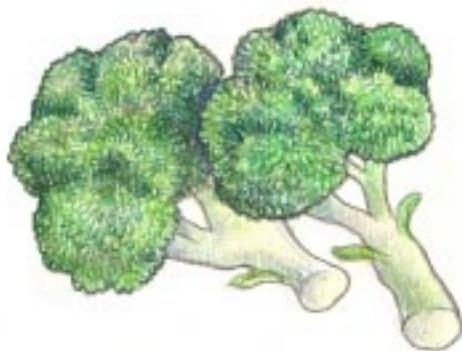


CHILD-SIZE SERVINGS



Young children's appetites can vary widely from day to day, depending on how they are growing and how active they are. As long as they have plenty of energy, are healthy, are growing well, and are eating a variety of foods, they are probably getting enough of the nutrients they need from the foods they eat. If you are concerned about your child eating too much or too little, check with your doctor or other healthcare provider.

- ☞ Children 2 to 3 years of age need the same variety of foods as 4- to 6-year-olds but may need fewer calories. Offer them smaller amounts.
- ☞ A good estimate of a serving for a 2- to 3-year-old child is about $\frac{2}{3}$ of what counts as a regular Food Guide Pyramid serving. See the regular serving size food list starting on page 7.
- ☞ Two- to 6-year-old children need a total of 2 servings from the milk group each day.
- ☞ Younger children often eat small portions. Offering smaller servings and allowing them to ask for more, satisfies their hunger and does not waste food.
- ☞ By the time children are 4 years old, they can eat amounts that count as regular Food Guide Pyramid servings eaten by older family members—that is, $\frac{1}{2}$ cup fruit or vegetable, $\frac{3}{4}$ cup of juice, 1 slice of bread, 2 to 3 ounces of cooked lean meat, poultry, or fish.
- ☞ Offer new foods in small “try me” portions—perhaps 1 or 2 tablespoons—let your children ask for more.
- ☞ Remember, variety is key for the whole family. Offer a variety of foods from the five major food groups, and let your children decide how much to eat.



BUILD A PYRAMID

Choose Foods from the Five Major Food Groups Every Day



WHAT COUNTS AS ONE FOOD GUIDE

PYRAMID SERVING? Each of the portions listed in the five major food groups below count as one Food Guide Pyramid serving for anyone over 4 years of age. When counting servings, smaller portions count as part of a serving and larger portions count as more than one serving. Two- to 3-year-old children need the variety and the same numbers of servings as older children but may need fewer calories. To get variety but fewer calories, offer 2- to 3-year-olds a smaller portion but count it as one serving. Offer about $\frac{2}{3}$ of the portion you would give a 4- to 6-year-old, except for milk. Two- to 6-year-old children need a total of 2 servings from the milk group each day.



GRAIN GROUP CHOICES

(6 servings each day)

WHOLE GRAIN

- 1/2 cup cooked brown rice
- 2-3 graham cracker squares
- 5-6 whole grain crackers
- 1/2 cup cooked oatmeal
- 1/2 cup cooked bulgur
- *3 cups popped popcorn
- *3 rice or popcorn cakes
- 1 ounce ready-to-eat whole grain cereal
- 1 slice pumpernickel, rye, or whole wheat bread
- * 2 taco shells
- 1 7-inch corn tortilla

ENRICHED

- 1/2 cup cooked rice or pasta
- 1/2 cup cooked spaghetti
- 1/2 English muffin or bagel
- 1 slice white, wheat, French or Italian bread
- 1/2 hamburger or hot dog bun
- 1 small roll
- 6 crackers (saltine size)
- 1 4-inch pita bread
- 1 4-inch pancake
- 1/2 cup cooked grits
- 1/2 cup cooked farina or other cereal
- *9 3-ring pretzels
- 1 ounce ready-to-eat, non-sugar coated, cereal
- 1 7-inch flour tortilla

Grain Products with More Fat and Sugars

- 1 small biscuit or muffin
- 1 small piece cornbread
- 1/2 medium doughnut
- 9 animal crackers
- 4 small cookies

**May cause choking in 2- to 3-year-old children.*

Offer whole or mixed grain products for at least three of the six grain group choices the Pyramid recommends each day.

VARIETY EVERY DAY

VEGETABLE GROUP CHOICES (3 servings each day)

DARK-GREEN LEAFY

- 1/2 cup cooked collard greens
- 1 cup leafy raw vegetables—
romaine lettuce, spinach, or
mixed green salad
- 2 cooked broccoli spears
- 1/2 cup cooked turnip greens, kale,
or mustard greens

DEEP-YELLOW

- 1 1/2 whole carrots, cooked
- * 7-8 raw carrot sticks (3" long)
- 1/2 cup winter squash

STARCHY

- * 1 medium ear of corn
- 10 french fries, regular size
- 1 baked potato, medium
- 1/2 cup potato salad
- 1/2 cup green peas
- 1/2 cup lima beans
- 1 medium plantain

DRY BEANS & PEAS

- 1/2 cup cooked black, kidney, pinto,
or garbanzo beans, or black-
eyed peas
- 1/2 cup cooked lentils
- 1 cup bean soup
- 1/2 cup cooked split peas

OTHER

- 1/3 medium cucumber
- 9 raw snow or sugar pea pods
- 1/2 cup cooked green beans
- 4 medium brussels sprouts
- 6 slices raw summer squash
- 1/2 cup coleslaw

- 1/2 cup cooked cabbage
- * 7-8 celery sticks (3" long)
- 1/2 cup tomato or spaghetti sauce
- 3/4 cup vegetable juice
- 1 cup vegetable soup
- 1 medium tomato
- * 5 cherry tomatoes

FRUIT GROUP CHOICES (2 servings each day)

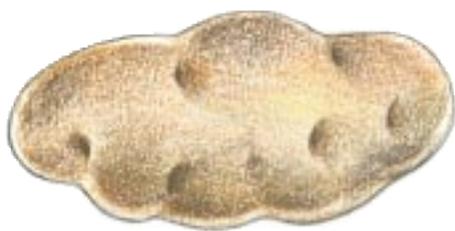
CITRUS, MELONS, BERRIES

- 1/2 cup blueberries or raspberries
- 1/4 medium cantaloup
- 3/4 cup 100% citrus juice (orange)
- grapefruit half
- 1/8 medium honeydew
- 1 large kiwifruit
- 1 medium orange
- 7 medium strawberries
- 1 medium tangerine
- 1/2 cup watermelon pieces

OTHER

- 1 medium apple, banana, peach, or
nectarine
- 2 medium apricots
- * 11 cherries
- * 1/4 cup dried fruit
- 1/2 cup applesauce
- 2 1/2 canned pineapple slices
- * 12 grapes
- 1/2 medium mango
- 1/4 medium papaya
- 1 small pear
- 1/2 cup cut-up fresh, canned, or
cooked fruit

**May cause choking in 2- to 3-year-old children.*



Many juice beverages are not 100% juice. Check the ingredient listing to make sure you're getting all juice without added sugars such as corn syrup.

MILK GROUP CHOICES

(2 servings each day)—One serving of the milk group is based on the amount of calcium in 1 cup of milk. This group is where partial servings are eaten most often.

FOR THIS AMOUNT OF FOOD...	COUNT THIS MANY MILK GROUP SERVINGS.
1 cup milk	1
1 cup soy milk, calcium fortified	1
1/2 cup milk	1/2
1 cup yogurt (8 ounces)	1
1 1/2 ounces natural cheese	1
2 ounces process cheese	1
1 string cheese (1 ounce)	2/3
1/2 cup cottage cheese	1/4
1/2 cup ice cream	1/3
1/2 cup frozen yogurt	1/2
1/2 cup pudding	1/2



FAT TIPS: Here are two easy ways to reduce fat. Gradually change from whole milk to lower fat dairy products such as 2% or 1% fat milk or fat-free milk by age 5. Offer lean meats or low-fat luncheon meats instead of higher fat ones. These tips can be used by the whole family.

MEAT GROUP CHOICES

(2 servings each day)—Two to three ounces of cooked lean meat, poultry, or fish equal one serving from this group. Amounts from this food group should total 5 ounces a day for 4- to 6-year-olds and about 3 1/2 ounces a day for 2- to 3-year-olds. Count 1 egg or 1/2 cup of cooked dry beans as 1 ounce of lean meat. Count 2 tablespoons peanut butter as 1 ounce of meat.

FOR THIS AMOUNT OF FOOD...	COUNT THIS MANY OUNCES.
2 ounces cooked lean meat	2 ounces
2 ounces cooked poultry or fish	2 ounces
1 egg (yolk and white)	1 ounce
*2 tablespoons peanut butter	1 ounce
*1 1/2 frankfurters (2 ounces)	1 ounce
2 slices bologna or luncheon meat (2 ounces)	1 ounce
1/4 cup drained canned salmon or tuna	1 ounce
1/2 cup cooked kidney, pinto, or white beans	1 ounce
1/2 cup tofu	1 ounce
1 soy burger patty	1 ounce

*May cause choking in 2- to 3-year-old children.

Counting to see if your child has 5 ounces from the meat group is tricky. Portion sizes vary with the type of food and meal. For example, 5 ounces might come from a combination of: 1 egg for breakfast; 2 ounces of sliced turkey at lunch; and 2 ounces cooked lean hamburger for dinner.



KIDS IN THE KITCHEN



CHILDREN enjoy helping in the kitchen and often are more willing to eat foods they help prepare. Involve your child in planning and preparing some meals and snacks for the family.

It is important that you give kitchen tasks appropriate for your child's age. Be patient as your child gains new skills at different ages.

MEAL PREPARATION ACTIVITIES FOR YOUNG CHILDREN:

Children have to be shown and taught how to do these activities. Each child has his or her own pace for learning, so give it time and the skills will come.

2-year-olds:

- | | |
|------------------------|---|
| Wipe table tops | Snap green beans |
| Scrub vegetables | Wash salad greens |
| Tear lettuce or greens | Play with utensils |
| Break cauliflower | Bring ingredients from one place to another |

3-year-olds: Can do what 2-year-olds do, plus...

- | | |
|----------------------------------|------------------------------------|
| Wrap potatoes in foil for baking | Shake liquids in covered container |
| Knead and shape yeast dough | Spread soft spreads |
| Pour liquids | Place things in trash |
| Mix ingredients | |

4-year-olds: Can do all that 2- and 3-years-olds do, plus...

- | | |
|--|-------------------------|
| Peel oranges or hard cooked eggs | Mash bananas using fork |
| Move hands to form round shape | Set table |
| Cut parsley or green onions with dull scissors | |

5- to 6-year-olds: Can do all that 2-, 3-, and 4-years-olds do, plus...

- | | |
|----------------------|-------------------|
| Measure ingredients | Use an egg beater |
| Cut with blunt knife | |



When your child is helping you with food preparation, don't forget cleanliness. Wash hands using soap and warm running water before and after handling food or utensils to prepare food.



Expect a few spills. It's a small price to pay for helping your children become comfortable around food.



BE SNACK-WISE . . .

Plan 'Em Using the Food Guide Pyramid



THESE ideas work at home or “on the go.”

Snacks from the Grain Group

Cracker stacks—wheat crackers spread with cheese spread

Ready-to-eat cereals

Flavored mini rice cakes or popcorn cakes

Breads of all kinds such as multi-grain, rye, white, wheat

Ginger snaps or fig bars

*Popcorn

*Trail mix...ready-to-eat cereals mixed with raisins or other dried fruit

Graham crackers

Snacks from the Vegetable Group

Vegetable sticks such as carrot*, celery*, green pepper, cucumber, or squash

*Celery stuffed with peanut butter

Cherry tomatoes cut in small pieces

Steamed broccoli, green beans, or sugar peas with lowfat dip

Snacks from the Fruit Group

Apple ring sandwiches..peanut butter on apple rings

Tangerine sections

Chunks of banana or pineapple

Canned fruits packed in juice

Juice box (100% juice)

Snacks from the Milk Group

Milk shakes—made with fruit and milk

Cheese slices with thin apple wedges

String cheese or individually wrapped slices

Mini yogurt cups

Snacks from the Meat Group

Hard cooked eggs (wedges or slices)

Peanut butter spread thin on crackers

Bean dip spread thin on crackers

**May cause choking in 2- to 3-year-old children.*



For ingredients, stock up on simple foods such as peanut butter; cheese spread or slices; whole grain crackers; little bagels; small pita breads; non-sugar-coated, ready-to-eat cereals; vegetables and fruits.



VARIETY EVERY DAY

PLAN FOR VARIETY



Most young children need a snack or two in addition to their three regular daily meals.

VARIETY is the key to planning menus using the Pyramid. The foods you offer your child each day should include choices from all five major food groups. Meals and snacks should also include different choices within each food group. For example, offer different breads, whole grain and enriched, different vegetables, especially dark-green leafy and deep-yellow ones, and dry beans and peas.

Below is a **SAMPLE** of a young child's daily menu to show how the Food Guide Pyramid servings may add up through the day. Of course, this is just one of many possible meal patterns.

ONE DAY'S SAMPLE MEALS AND SNACKS FOR 4- TO 6-YEAR-OLD CHILDREN

(Offer 2- to 3-year-olds the same variety but smaller portions)

	GRAIN	VEGGIE	FRUIT	MILK	MEAT
Breakfast					
100% fruit juice, $\frac{3}{4}$ cup			1		
toast, 1 slice	1				
fortified cereal, 1 oz	1				
milk, $\frac{1}{2}$ cup				$\frac{1}{2}$	
Mid-Morning Snack					
graham crackers, 2 squares	1				
milk, $\frac{1}{2}$ cup				$\frac{1}{2}$	
Lunch					
meat, poultry, or fish, 2 oz					2 oz
macaroni, $\frac{1}{2}$ cup	1				
vegetable, $\frac{1}{2}$ cup		1			
fruit, $\frac{1}{2}$ cup			1		
milk, $\frac{1}{2}$ cup				$\frac{1}{2}$	
Mid-Afternoon Snack					
whole grain crackers, 5	1				
peanut butter, 1 Tbsp					$\frac{1}{2}$ oz
cold water, $\frac{1}{2}$ cup					
Dinner					
meat, poultry, or fish, $2\frac{1}{2}$ oz					$2\frac{1}{2}$ oz
potato, 1 medium		1			
broccoli, $\frac{1}{2}$ cup		1			
cornbread, 1 small piece	1				
milk, $\frac{1}{2}$ cup				$\frac{1}{2}$	
Total Food Group Servings	6	3	2	2	5 oz

LEARNING ACTIVITY:

What's in My Taco?

PREPARING AND TASTING NEW FOODS CAN BE FUN!! BUILD A DELICIOUS AND NUTRITIOUS TACO FOR LUNCH—PYRAMID STYLE.



MATERIALS NEEDED: Plates, spoons, and napkins

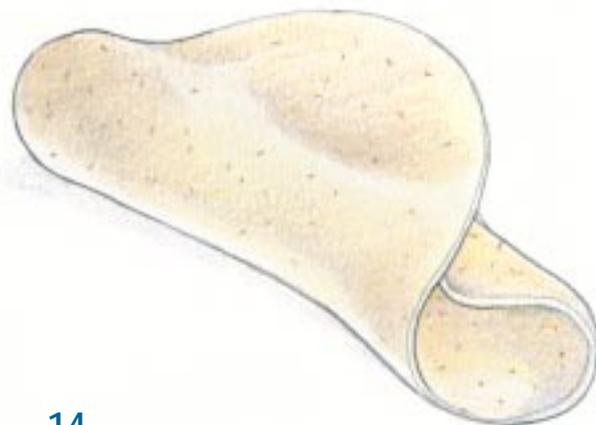
INGREDIENTS: Soft tortillas (one for each person), head of lettuce, tomato, mild cheddar cheese, taco sauce, pinto beans (canned or home cooked)

PREPARATION NEEDED: Prepare recipe ingredients (chop tomato, shred lettuce, grate cheese, mash beans) and refrigerate in individual containers.

OBJECTIVE: To taste new foods.

KEY IDEA: A wide variety of foods can be used to create appealing recipes.

PARENT INFORMATION: The taco recipe that follows is a great example of a dish that is made up of a variety of foods from the different food groups. The soft taco recipe is made up of foods from four of the five major food groups of the Food Guide Pyramid: tortilla (Grain Group); lettuce and tomato (Vegetable Group); cheese (Milk Group); and beans (Meat Group). In this activity, children will be creating a fun meal, trying new foods, while learning about the food groups in the Pyramid.



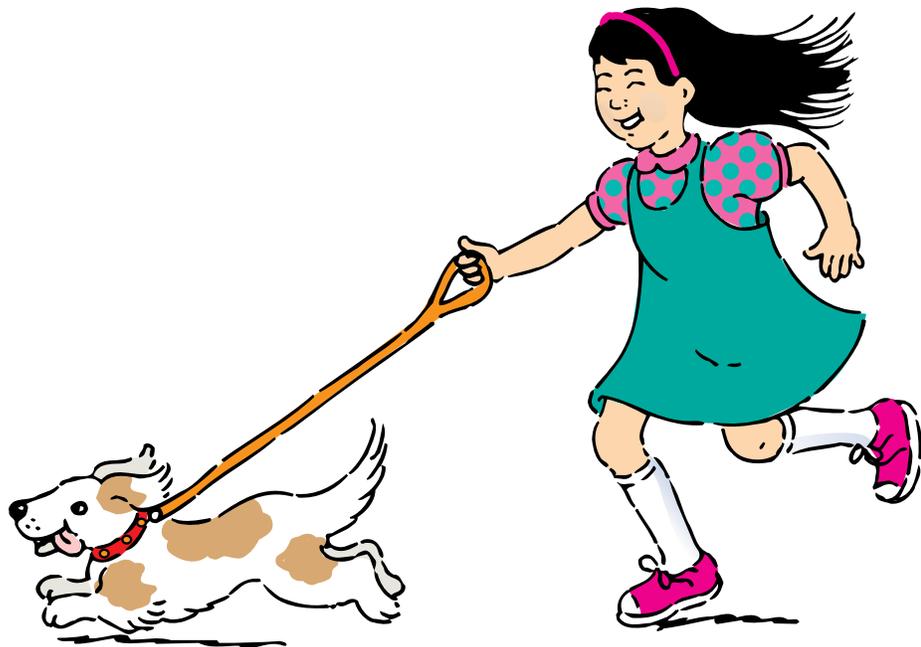
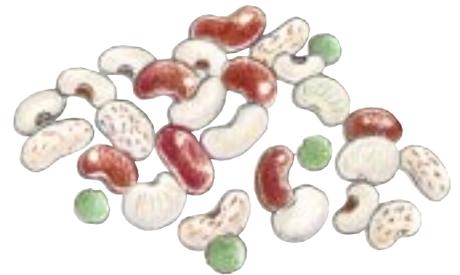
SOFT TACO ACTIVITY

TO BEGIN:

1. Make sure you and your children wash hands with soap and warm running water.
2. Have your children sit at the table as they do for meals.
3. Talk briefly about the activity.

CREATE A SOFT TACO:

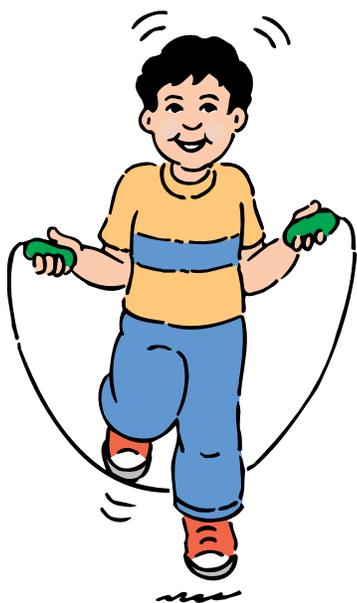
1. Assist your children when it's time to assemble the soft tacos.
2. Place the ingredients in bowls and each bowl should have its own spoon.
3. Put a tortilla on each person's plate.
4. Invite your children to make a taco. Identify each ingredient for your children.
5. The beans should be spread on the tortilla first. Your children may need your help. You and your children add some of each ingredient to your tortillas.
6. When everyone has made a taco, fold in half and enjoy.
7. As you and your children eat, you may ask "Can you taste the lettuce...the tomato...the cheese...the beans...the tortilla in your taco?"



PYRAMID CONNECTION

Looking at the Food Guide Pyramid for Young Children on page 4, have your children identify in which food groups the soft taco ingredients belong.

CHEESE from the MILK GROUP
 BEANS from the MEAT GROUP
 LETTUCE from the VEGETABLE GROUP
 TOMATO from the VEGETABLE GROUP
 FLOUR TORTILLA from the GRAIN GROUP



Remind your children that eating a variety of foods is good for the whole family, and tacos provide many different foods at once.

READING CONNECTION

Start a discussion about the importance of eating a variety of foods by reading aloud from a library book such as *Bread and Jam for Frances*, by Russell Hoban. Talk about what happens when Frances finally gets to eat bread and jam for every meal and why it's healthier for her to eat many different kinds of foods.

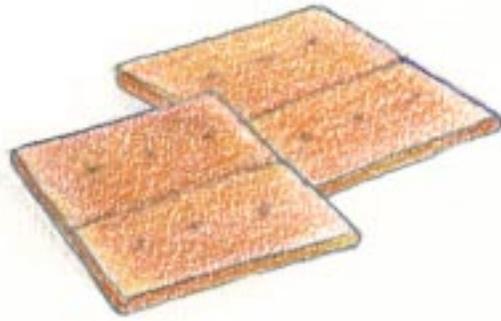
SOFT TACO RECIPE

To make 4 tacos you'll need:

4, 7-inch flour tortillas	1/2 cup grated mild cheddar cheese
1 cup shredded lettuce	1/4 cup taco sauce
1 cup chopped tomato	1, 15 1/2-ounce can pinto beans

NOTE: Parents prepare ingredients

1. Rinse and shred lettuce.
 2. Rinse and chop tomato.
 3. Grate cheese.
 4. Drain canned beans and mash using a fork, adding enough taco sauce to moisten and form a paste.
 5. Spread mashed beans on flat tortilla.
 6. Top with cheese, lettuce, tomato, and taco sauce. Fold in half, then cut into two pieces.
- No cooking or heating necessary.



FOR MORE INFORMATION

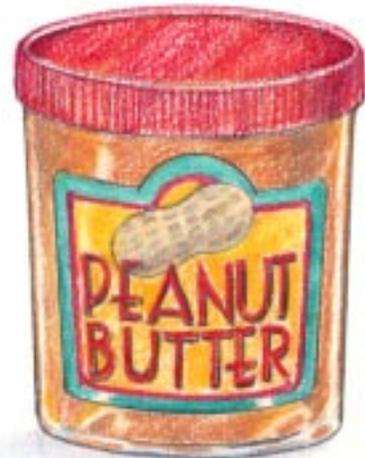
Contact USDA's Center for Nutrition Policy and Promotion. The address is:

U.S. Department of Agriculture
Center for Nutrition Policy and Promotion
1120 20th St., NW
Suite 200, North Lobby
Washington, DC 20036-3475

For additional advice on maintaining a healthful diet, you may contact your county extension home economist (Cooperative Extension System); or a nutrition professional in your local public health department, hospital, American Red Cross, dietetic association, or private practice.

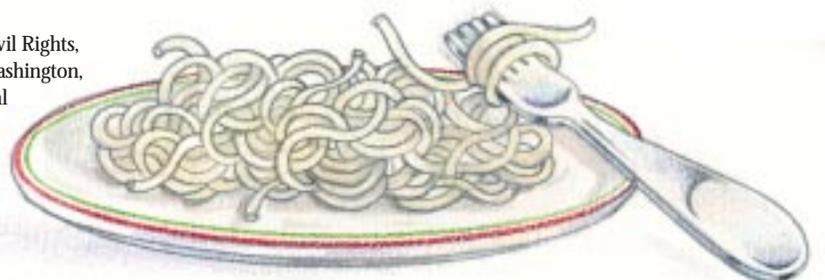
Availability of nutrition information—Some USDA nutrition publications may be purchased in single copies and bulk quantities from the Consumer Information Center and the Government Printing Office. For a list of available publications and ordering instructions go to the web site below.

Some nutrition materials, including this publication, the Food Guide Pyramid for Young Children graphic, the Food Guide Pyramid booklet (HG-252) and graphic, and the Dietary Guidelines for Americans (HG-232), may be accessed through the CNPP Home Page (World Wide Web) at: www.usda.gov/cnpp



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