

Eat A Wide Variety Of Foods

Variety means eating different kinds of foods from the Five Food Groups of MyPyramid. Each food group carries nutrients that are not found in large amounts in the other food groups. Children tend to get into favorite-food ruts.

If you and your child do not eat a variety of foods, you will miss out on nutrients for growth, energy, and health.

The nutrients you and your child need are in the Five Food Groups. Every day, try to include these foods:



Food Group	Daily Amount	Examples
Grains	6 ounces	Rice, pasta, breads, tortillas, cereals, pancakes, crackers, taco shells, pizza crust
Vegetables	2 to 2 1/2 cups	Corn, tomatoes, greens, peas, cabbage, broccoli
Fruits	1 1/2 to 2 cups	Apples, strawberries, oranges, grapes, bananas
Milk	2 to 3 cups	Milk, yogurt, cheese
Meat and Beans	5 1/2 ounces	Beef, pork, chicken, fish, nuts, eggs, beans

Notice the above list does not include a group for sugar, fat, or foods with fat or gravy. These are EXTRA FOODS that add calories (energy) and flavor to our meals, but have little nutritional value. The exception is that some oil is needed each day for good health, especially one containing Omega-3 fatty acid. For a 2,000 calorie food pattern (amount needed by most adult females), a total of 6 teaspoons of oil per day is recommended. Olive and canola oils and oil from fish are best. Such foods should be used in small amounts. People who eat too many high-fat or high-sugar foods may have poor nutrition and are likely to be overweight.

What you can do to increase variety at home:

- Have a rule that everyone has to at least taste new foods. However, if someone doesn't like the food, he/she shouldn't be forced to eat it.
- Offer only one new food at a meal.
- Serve vegetables the way kids prefer them: raw or cooked until just tender.
- Have your child help you select and prepare foods. Kids tend to eat foods they help make.
- Don't serve only your children's favorite foods. Keep them on the menu, but make sure there are other foods to try, too.
- Set a good example with your own eating habits.