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Diet and Exercise Recommendations for Children

From the American Heart Association, Medline and the CDC

Diet:

- Eat foods **low in saturated fat**, trans fat, cholesterol, salt (sodium), and added sugars.
- Keep total **fat intake** between 30 to 35 percent of calories for children 2 to 3 years of age and between 25 to 35 percent of calories for children and adolescents 4 to 18 years of age, with most fats coming from sources of polyunsaturated and monounsaturated fatty acids, such as fish, nuts and vegetable oils.
- Choose a **variety** of foods to get enough carbohydrates, protein and other nutrients.
- Serve **whole-grain/high-fiber** breads and cereals rather than refined grain products. Look for “whole grain” as the first ingredient on the food label and make at least half your grain servings whole grain.
- Serve a variety of **fruits and vegetables** daily, while limiting juice intake. Each meal should contain at least 1 fruit or vegetable.
- Introduce and regularly serve **fish** as an entrée. Avoid commercially fried fish.
- Serve **fat-free and low-fat dairy** foods.
- **Don't overfeed.** Estimated calories needed by children are listed in the chart on page 4.

Caloric Recommendations for Children Ages 1-3

1 year 2-3 years

Calories (kilocalories) per day (kcal/d)	900 kcal/d	1000 kcal/d	Calorie estimates are based on a sedentary lifestyle. Increased physical activity will require additional calories: by 0-200 kcal/d if moderately physically active; and by 200–400 kcal/d if very physically active.
Fat	30-40%	30-35%	
Milk / Dairy	2 cups	2 cups	<p>Milk listed is fat -free (except for children under the age of 2 years). If 1%, 2%, or whole-fat milk is substituted, this will utilize, for each cup, 19, 39, or 63 kilocalorie of discretionary calories and add 2.6, 5.1, or 9.0 grams of total fat, of which 1.3, 2.6, or 4.6 grams are saturated fat.</p> <p>For 1-year-old children, calculations are based on 2% fat milk. If 2 cups of whole milk are substituted, 48 kilocalories of discretionary calories will be utilized. The American Academy of Pediatrics recommends that low fat or reduced fat milk not be started before 2 years of age.</p>
Lean Meat and Beans	1.5 ounces	2 ounces	
Fruits	1 cup	1 cup	Serving sizes are 1/4 cup for 1 year of age, 1/3 cup for 2 to 3 years of age, and 1/2 cup for children 4 years of age and older.
Vegetables	3/4 cup	1 cup	Serving sizes are 1/4 cup for 1 year of age, 1/3 cup for 2 to 3 years of age, and 1/2 cup for children 4 years of age and older. A variety of vegetables should be selected from each subgroup over the week.
Grains	2 ounces	3 ounces	Half of all grains should be whole.

Dietary Recommendations for Children Ages 4 to 18

	4 to 8 years	9 to 13 years	14 to 18 years	
Calories kilocalories per day (kcal/d)				<p>Calorie estimates are based on a sedentary lifestyle. Increased physical activity will require additional calories: by 0-200 kilocalories per day if moderately physically active; and by 200-400 kilocalories per day if very physically active.</p> <p>For youth 2 years and older; adopted from Table 2, Table 3, and Appendix A-2 of the Dietary Guidelines for Americans (2005); http://www.healthierus.gov/dietaryguidelines. Nutrient and energy contributions from each group are calculated according to the nutrient-dense forms of food in each group (eg, lean meats and fat-free milk).</p>
Female	1200 kcal/d	1600 kcal/d	1800 kcal/d	
Male	1400 kcal/d	1800 kcal/d	2200 kcal/d	
Fat	25% to 35%	25% to 35%	25% to 35%	
Milk / Dairy	2 cups	3 cups	3 cups	Milk listed is fat free (except for children under the age of 2 years). If 1%, 2%, or whole fat milk is substituted, this will utilize, for each cup, 19, 39, or 63 kilocalories per day of discretionary calories and add 2.6, 5.1, or 9.0 grams of total fat, of which 1.3, 2.6, or 4.6 grams are saturated fat.
Lean Meat / Beans				
Female	3 ounces	5 ounces	5 ounces	
Male	4 ounces	5 ounces	6 ounces	
Fruits				Serving size is 1/2 cup for children 4 years of age and older.
Female	1.5 cups	1.5 cups	1.5 cups	
Male	1.5 cups	1.5 cups	2 cups	
Vegetables				
				Serving size is 1/2 cup for children 4 years of age and older. A variety of vegetables should be selected from each subgroup over the week.
Female	1 cup	2 cups	2.5 cups	
Male	1.5 cups	2.5 cups	3 cups	
Grains				
				Half of all grains should be whole.
Female	4 ounces	5 ounces	6 ounces	
Male	5 ounces	6 ounces	7 ounces	

Calories Needed Each Day for Boys and Men

Age	Not Active	Somewhat Active	Very Active
2–3 years	1,000–1,200 calories	1,000–1,400 calories	1,000–1,400 calories
4–8 years	1,200–1,400 calories	1,400–1,600 calories	1,600–2,000 calories
9–13 years	1,600–2,000 calories	1,800–2,200 calories	2,000–2,600 calories
14–18 years	2,000–2,400 calories	2,400–2,800 calories	2,800–3,200 calories
19–30 years	2,400–2,600 calories	2,600–2,800 calories	3,000 calories
31–50 years	2,200–2,400 calories	2,400–2,600 calories	2,800–3,000 calories
51 years and older	2,000–2,200 calories	2,200–2,400 calories	2,400–2,800 calories

Calories Needed Each Day for Girls and Women

Age	Not Active	Somewhat Active	Very Active
2–3 years	1,000 calories	1,000–1,200 calories	1,000–1,400 calories
4–8 years	1,200–1,400 calories	1,400–1,600 calories	1,400–1,800 calories
9–13 years	1,400–1,600 calories	1,600–2,000 calories	1,800–2,200 calories
14–18 years	1,800 calories	2,000 calories	2,400 calories
19–30 years	1,800–2,000 calories	2,000–2,200 calories	2,400 calories
31–50 years	1,800 calories	2,000 calories	2,200 calories
51 years and older	1,600 calories	1,800 calories	2,000–2,200 calories

Exercise:

Like adults, kids need exercise. Most children need at least an hour of physical activity every day.

Regular exercise helps children:

- Feel less stressed
- Feel better about themselves
- Feel more ready to learn in school
- Keep a healthy weight
- Build and keep healthy bones, muscles and joints
- Sleep better at night

As kids spend more time watching TV, they spend less time running and playing. Parents should limit TV, video game and computer time. Parents can set a good example by being active themselves. Exercising together can be fun for everyone. Competitive sports can help kids stay fit. Walking or biking to school, dancing, bowling and yoga are some other ways for kids to get exercise.

Kids and adolescents **need 60 minutes of exercise each day**. There are 3 types of exercise to consider:

- **Aerobic activity** should make up most of your child's 60 or more minutes of physical activity each day. This can include either moderate-intensity aerobic activity, such as brisk walking, or vigorous-intensity activity, such as running. Be sure to include vigorous-intensity aerobic activity on at least 3 days per week.

- Include **muscle strengthening activities**, such as gymnastics or push-ups, at least 3 days per week as part of your child's 60 or more minutes.

- Include **bone strengthening activities**, such as jumping rope or running, at least 3 days per week as part of your child's 60 or more minutes.

Many physical activities fall under more than one type of activity. This makes it possible for your child to do two or even three types of physical activity in one day! For example, if your daughter is on a basketball team and practices with her teammates everyday, she is not only doing vigorous-intensity aerobic activity but also bone-strengthening. Or, if your daughter takes gymnastics lessons, she is not only doing vigorous-intensity aerobic activity but also muscle- and bone-strengthening! It's easy to fit each type of activity into your child's schedule – all it takes is being familiar with the *Guidelines* and finding activities that your child enjoys.

How can you **encourage your child to exercise more**?

As a parent, you can help shape your child's attitudes and behaviors toward physical activity, and knowing these guidelines is a great place to start. Throughout their lives, encourage young people to be physically active for one hour or more each day, with activities ranging from informal, active play to organized sports. Here are some ways you can do this:

- Set a positive example by leading an active lifestyle yourself.
- Make physical activity part of your family's daily routine by taking family walks or playing active games together.
- Give your children equipment that encourages physical activity.
- Take young people to places where they can be active, such as public parks, community baseball fields or basketball courts.
- Be positive about the physical activities in which your child participates and encourage them to be interested in new activities.
- Make physical activity fun. Fun activities can be anything your child enjoys, either structured or non-structured. Activities can range from team sports or individual sports to recreational activities such as walking, running, skating, bicycling, swimming, playground activities or free-time play.
- Instead of watching television after dinner, encourage your child to find fun activities to do on their own or with friends and family, such as walking, playing chase or riding bikes.
- Be safe! Always provide protective equipment such as helmets, wrist pads or knee pads and ensure that activity is age-appropriate.