

Eating

Tips for children aged 2 to 4 years



Children need a daily balanced diet:

- Some milk (not skimmed milk) or dairy products such as yoghurt and cheese
- One portion (equivalent of one fist) of meat or fish or other protein
- Bread, cereal, rice, pasta and potatoes
- A rainbow of five portions of fruit and vegetables
- Plenty of water
- Limit too many sugary, fatty or salty foods such as biscuits, crisps and fried foods.

How often do young children eat?

Three meals a day with two small snacks between.

Eating habits

Young children can be fussy so it is important to establish good eating patterns at meals. Children learn they can get attention when eating so give the attention for good eating!



Promoting positive approaches to eating:

- Give some choice but not too much!
- Keep introducing new foods gradually by putting a small amount on the plate
- Give small helpings of food on a smaller plate, as you can always give more later
- Let the child serve him or herself if this is safe to do
- Be calm at mealtimes (even if you feel upset or angry)
- Role model good eating as a family (eating the way you want your child to, with the same variety)
- Think about the food choices that you make and how these may influence your child
- If a child doesn't want any more, don't urge or encourage any more eating as this helps a child learn when they are full
- Be consistent at every meal time
- Limit unhealthy snacks and fizzy drinks between meals so your child is hungry.

If your child refuses a food, encourage gently but if not just remove and don't make a fuss or give in to giving unhealthy snacks.

Children go through phases and so it is important to try foods again at a later date. Maybe try the food again in a different form or prepared differently, for example put vegetables blended into a soup if they won't eat them raw.

Remember...

- No child starves if there is food available.
- All children are different and have different appetites.

