

How Much Food Does My Child Need?



1. How much food is enough and how much is too much? **Kids should eat 3 meals a day and 2-3 healthy snacks during the day if they want it.**
2. **Easy ways to figure out how big a serving your child should get:**
 - ◆ 1 tablespoon per year of age for solid foods that are easy to measure.
 - ◆ 1/4th to 1/3rd of the adult portion size for foods that may be difficult to measure - like bread and milk.
3. **There are some guidelines. The food guide pyramid for daily servings of vegetables, fruit, grains and meats can help guide you. Another guide is placing foods in three groups: Go, Slow, and Whoa.** The National Institutes of Health suggest preteens start thinking about whether foods are Go foods, Slow foods, or Whoa foods. Learn more at:
http://kidshealth.org/kid/stay_healthy/food/go_slow_whoa.html
 - ◆ **Go Foods:** These are foods that are good to eat almost anytime. They are the healthiest ones. Example: skim and low-fat milk.
 - ◆ **Slow Foods:** These are sometimes foods. They aren't off-limits, but they shouldn't be eaten every day. Example: waffles and pancakes.
 - ◆ **Whoa Foods:** These foods should make you say exactly that — Whoa! Should I eat that? Whoa foods are the least healthy and the most likely to cause weight problems, especially if eaten often. Whoa foods are once-in-a-while foods. Example: French fries.
4. **The amount of food depends upon your individual child - how old they are, how much activity they get, and how big or little they are.** Always let your child **stop** eating when they feel **full**.
5. **It is not a good idea to use food as a reward.** It may lead to overeating and obesity.
6. **Encourage your child to learn to eat a nutritionally balanced diet.** Good habits learned in childhood can lead to long, healthy life.
7. Remember, food likes and dislikes may change frequently, so be prepared to be creative in the kitchen and keep offering food that may have been refused in the past!

We're here to help. To learn more about UIC-Specialized Care for Children's programs and services, check out our website at:

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