



Helping families eat well and be active

The Right Amount To Eat

How much should my growing child eat? How much whole grain pasta is right for a young child? Are second servings OK at dinner?

Questions like these can be difficult for parents to answer. The table below shows what might be an appropriate serving size for each age group. Keep in mind that children may need more or less depending on how much they move around, their size and growth spurts. The best way to teach your child how much to eat is to tell your child to listen to their own body signals. Eat when they're hungry. Stop when they're comfortable.

1. Start small:

Start with small amounts of food, using the table below as a guide. Having seconds depends on whether or not your child is hungry after eating slowly and taking a break. We suggest family-style meals where children and teens serve themselves.

2. Eat slowly:

Children often eat way too quickly. If a child eats too quickly, they may eat more than they should. Teach your children to chew food slowly. Talk to them at the table. Slow the meal down. It takes about 20 minutes for your stomach to tell your brain it's full.

3. Take a time out between firsts and seconds:

Have your child wait a bit between first and second helpings. Your child may find he or she feels full without the extra food.

4. Know the idea of Myplate.gov:

Your child's plate should be 50% fruits and vegetables, 25% lean meat or beans and 25% whole grains.

5. Know these general rules for what amount of food to eat:

- One-fourth cup is the size of a large egg.
- A half cup is the size of half of a baseball.
- One cup is the size of a fist or baseball.

6. Keep the chart below handy:

Food	Number of Servings Each Day	1-3 Years	4-5 Years	6-12 Years	12 Years +
Whole grains (bread, cereal, pasta)	5 or less	½ slice or ¼ cup	1/2 slice or ½ cup	1 slice or ½ cup	1 slice or 1/2 cup
Vegetables	3-5	¼ cup	1/3 cup	1/2 cup	1/2 cup
Fruits	2-4	¼ cup	1/3 cup	1/2 cup	1/2 cup
Dairy (food or drink with milk in them)	2-3	½ cup	3/4 cup	1 cup	1 cup
Protein	2-3	1 ounce or ¼ cup	1.5 ounces or 1/3 cup	2 ounces or ½ cup	2-3 ounces or ½ cup

