

new foods or wipes his face with a napkin. Remember that appetites change. Your child may be very hungry one day and eat only a little the next.

Involving Children in Food Preparation

Children like to be part of any family activity. Letting them help in food preparation helps them develop an interest in food. It also teaches helping skills, counting skills and cooperation. Try to allow enough time to prepare meals so that you are not rushed. Be patient and give your child a chance to help with appropriate jobs.

When you ask a child to do something, give simple and specific directions:

“I need one fork from the drawer. Can you get it for me?”

“Would you please get the margarine out of the refrigerator?”

Watch your child to see that he can handle the job. If the refrigerator door is hard to open, think of things he can get out of low cabinets instead.

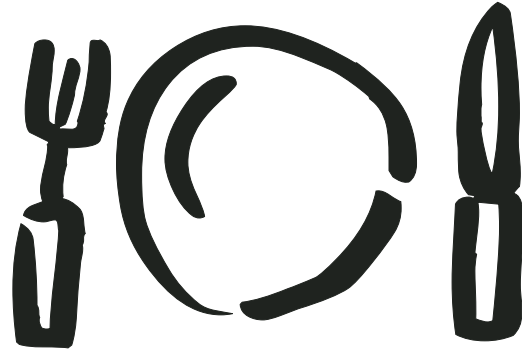
Show what you mean:

“Watch me pour the flour in the bowl. Now you try it.”

Here are some jobs a 3-year-old can try:

- Wash vegetables
- Clear dishes from table
- Pour ingredients
- Pour juice from small pitcher
- Knead bread dough
- Snap beans
- Peel banana (if top is cut)

- Get out silverware
- Open packages
- Spread peanut butter on bread



Snacks

Snacks should be a regular part of a child’s diet. Because preschoolers’ stomachs are still small, they eat small meals. Most children need more than three meals each day. Snacks should be nutritious, not junk food. Good snacks include fruit, cheese, juices, crackers with peanut butter and flavored yogurt.

Next Issue:

Family traditions, stress, safety and more!

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Putting Knowledge to Work

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1-2-3 Grow!

3½ YEARS - 3 YEARS 9 MONTHS

COOPERATIVE EXTENSION SERVICE
The University of Georgia
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3½ Years - 3 Years 9 Months

1-2-3 Grow!

HOW DOES YOUR PRESCHOOLER GROW?

Preschoolers are using their bodies all the time. They enjoy tumbling, jumping from heights and twirling in circles until dizzy. Preschoolers' bodies grow in spurts, then slow down. This means that food needs change. Later on, we will give you some ideas about making mealtimes fun and healthy.

Emotionally and socially, preschoolers are growing more independent. Your child will play away from you for longer periods now. For example, you may find that 20 minutes has gone by and your child has been playing out in his sandbox by himself. But don't be surprised if your child still needs lots of attention, hugging and comfort. Being independent is hard work, and your child will need to know he is doing a good job.



At 3½, children can think for themselves, express thoughts and ideas, and do many things on their own. They are also beginning to understand other people's feelings. When you get hurt, your child will give you a kiss and say (assuming you have shown that same kind of nurturing for him), "It will be all right." You can encourage this concern for others by expressing your feelings. Let your child know that everyone has needs, not just him. When he says, "I want some more juice;" say, "Please wait a minute while I finish my cereal." Treat your child with patience and respect. He will learn to treat others the same way.

Preschoolers also have vivid imaginations. Don't be upset if your child tells you a crazy story about how he saw a robot eat a tree. Fantasy is fun for 3-year-olds. Some children even include themselves in their stories. This imagination is very real to children. This is what makes them afraid of monsters and the dark. Sometimes it is hard to tell what is real and what is not. Be patient in explaining the difference to your child.

FOOD FOR LITTLE FOLKS

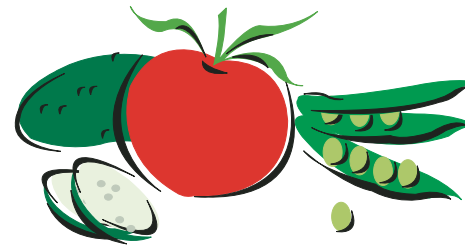
One big job for parents and other caregivers is to choose healthy food for children. With so many products on the market, it is hard to know what children really need. All people need the same types of food to provide the nutrients to grow and stay healthy. The main difference between adults' and children's diets is the amount of each nutrient needed. For example, children need more milk than adults do for growing bones. Adults require a larger serving size of meats or vegetables because

they have larger bodies. Here is a list of the basic types of foods we all need:

Breads and cereals – cooked cereals, ready-to-eat cereal, macaroni, rice, bread, muffins, rolls (include whole grain or enriched breads), spaghetti



Vegetables – green tomatoes, peas, beans, corn, carrots, potatoes



Fruits – melon, apples, peaches, strawberries, oranges, kiwi

Meat and meat substitutes – chicken, pork, beef, fish, eggs, peanut butter, dried beans or peas, nuts

Milk and dairy products – milk, yogurt, cheese, custard, pudding, milk-based soups

Children often want to eat certain foods all the time. This is generally not harmful as long as the food is nutritious. Children will eat what their bodies need if you make a variety of foods available. For example, a 3-year-old might eat pears, peaches and pineapple for several weeks but not bread. Then suddenly, no more fruit, but lots of bread. Then suddenly, no more bread, but lots of meat. Then milk and cheese will be a favorite.

Every once in a while, give your child a new food. Don't insist that he eat it, but let him know about it. Talk about the shape, texture and color. Encourage him to taste. If he does not like it the first time around, serve the food again in a few weeks. Children's tastes change just like adults'. As they get older, children learn to like more foods. Preschoolers who do not eat a variety of foods in a balanced diet may benefit from a multivitamin and iron supplement. Large doses of specific vitamins have not been shown to help healthy children, and in some cases may even be harmful.

Tips for serving meals

- Variety of color adds interest to the meal.
- Children are sensitive to temperature. Avoid very hot or cold foods.
- Serve small portions on a small plate. Let your child judge how much to eat. Make foods easy to eat. If your child is still having trouble with a spoon or fork, serve only one food that requires a utensil so your child can practice. Other foods should be finger foods. For example, carrots can be picked up with fingers, but rice or mashed potatoes cannot.
- Fill cups less than half full. This makes drinking easier and is less messy in case of spills.
- Serve meals at regular times. A hungry child is irritable and less likely to cooperate and eat well.
- Avoid nagging about table manners. Make mealtimes enjoyable. Encourage a child who does well with a spoon, tries