

➤ Background #1: Division of Responsibility, Child's Responsibilities

Feeding young children can be a parent's greatest concern. Comments like, "My child won't eat," "I feel like a short-order cook" and "Mealtime is such a hassle" are universal. Proper nourishment and independence are two of a child's basic needs that often conflict resulting in a power struggle between parent and child. In power struggles, especially over food, the child will always win! By honoring the division of responsibility, parents can prevent these power struggles.

The Division of Responsibility

Reference books by Ellen Satter contain a thorough discussion of raising healthy eaters using the division of responsibility. The *Cent#ible Nutrition* cookbook also has information on page 291.

Division of Responsibility	
Parent	Child
Decide what to serve	Decide whether or not to eat
Decide when to eat	Decide how much to eat
Decide where to eat	Decide what foods to eat
Make mealtime pleasant	Make mealtime pleasant

Children need to know that plenty of food will be provided and at predictable times. The security of knowing this will help prevent obesity in later life. Struggles about food can increase the probability of disordered eating and/or obesity. From a young age, parents can teach children to recognize and honor natural hunger and fullness cues.

➤ Background #2: Parents Responsibility: What to Serve

It is the parent's responsibility to serve healthy food choices. If a parent offers healthy food choices, it doesn't matter what a child chooses, every choice will be good. Children should be allowed to choose what foods they will eat. This develops decision making skills, builds confidence, and eliminates power struggles.

MyPyramid and Portions

Information from MyPyramid about kids 2 to 6 years of age can be accessed at www.mypyramid.gov. This is helpful for discussing what to serve. Calorie recommendations are offered for young children. The portions are adjusted according to the total number of calories recommended. These two charts can be helpful for talking about the food groups and recommended amounts of food for young children.

Age and gender	Calories	
	Sedentary	Active
2 to 3 years - female and male	1000	1400
4 to 6 years - female	1200	1600
4 to 6 years - male	1400	1800

Source: www.mypyramid.gov; For Professionals: MyPyramid Food Intake Patterns.

Sedentary means a lifestyle that includes only the light physical activity associated with typical day-to-day life.

Active means a lifestyle that includes 60 minutes or more of active play in addition to the typical activity of day-to-day life.

Calorie Level	Daily Amount from each Food Group					
	Grains	Fruits	Vegetables	Meat and Beans	Milk	Oils
1000	3 ounces	1 cup	1 cup	2-ounce equivalents	2 cups	3 teaspoons
1200	4 ounces	1 cup	1.5 cups	3-ounce equivalents	2 cups	4 teaspoons
1400	5 ounces	1.5 cups	1.5 cups	4-ounce equivalents	2 cups	4 teaspoons
1600	5 ounces	1.5 cups	2 cups	5-ounce equivalents	3 cups	5 teaspoons
1800	6 ounces	1.5 cups	2.5 cups	5-ounce equivalents	3 cups	5 teaspoons

Source: www.mypyramid.gov; For Professionals: MyPyramid Food Intake Patterns.

Foods in the grain group are known as the ‘GO’ foods because they provide carbohydrates for energy. The 2005 Dietary Guidelines for Americans say:

“The **Grains Group** includes all foods made from wheat, rice, oats, cornmeal, barley, such as bread, pasta, oatmeal, breakfast cereals, tortillas, and grits. In general, 1 slice of bread, 1 cup of ready-to-eat cereal, or ½ cup cooked rice, pasta, or cooked cereal can be considered as 1 ounce equivalent from the grains group. At least half of all grains consumed should be whole grains.”

Young children need 3 to 6 ounce-equivalents from the “GO” foods daily depending upon age and activity level. See previous charts.

Fruits and vegetables are known as the ‘GLOW’ foods because of the vitamins, minerals and phytochemicals they provide. The 2005 Dietary Guidelines for Americans say:

“The **Fruit Group** includes all fresh, frozen, canned, and dried fruits and fruit juices. In general, 1 cup of fruit or 100% fruit juice, or ½ cup dried fruit can be considered as 1 cup from the fruit group.”

“The **Vegetable Group** includes all fresh frozen, canned, and dried vegetables and vegetable juices. In general, 1 cup of raw or cooked vegetables or vegetable juice, or 2 cups raw leafy greens can be considered as 1 cup from the vegetable group.”

Two to six year olds need 1 to 1½ cups of fruit daily and 1 to 2½ cups of vegetables daily for a total of 2 to 3½ cups of “glow” foods depending upon age and activity level. See previous charts.

The milk and meat groups contain good sources of protein and are known as the ‘GROW’ foods. The milk group also supplies calcium and vitamin D. The 2005 Dietary Guidelines for Americans say:

“The **Milk Group** includes all fluid milk products and foods made from milk that retain their calcium content, such as yogurt and cheese. Foods made from milk that have little to no calcium, such as cream cheese, cream, and butter, are not part of the group. Most milk group choices should be fat-free or low-fat. In general, 1 cup of milk or yogurt, 1½ ounces of natural cheese, or 2 ounces of processed cheese can be considered as 1 cup from the milk group.”

Two to six year olds need the equivalent of 2 to 3 cups of milk per day depending upon age and activity level. See previous charts.

“For the **Meat and Beans Group** in general, a 1 ounce equivalent is 1 ounce of lean meat, poultry, or fish, 1 egg, 1 tablespoon peanut butter, ¼ cup cooked dry beans, or ½ ounce of nuts and seeds.”

Children two to six years of age need 2- to 5-ounce equivalents from the meat and beans group each day depending upon age and activity level. See previous charts.

On MyPyramid, the oils in foods are also reflected. Oils include fats from many different plants and from fish that are liquid at room temperature, such as canola, corn, olive, soybean, and sunflower oil. Some foods are naturally high in oils, like nuts, olives, some fish, and avocados. Foods that are mainly oil include mayonnaise, certain salad dressings, and soft margarine. Young children need about 3 to 5 teaspoons of oil each day depending upon age and activity level. See previous charts.

When adults serve adult-sized portions to children, they become overwhelmed. When able, children should be allowed to serve themselves. This can be an opportunity for a family to discuss portion sizes.

Snacks

A child’s stomach is about the size of his/her fist. It cannot hold enough food to support energy and growth needs from one meal to the next, so snacks are very important. Healthy snacks should be provided from the basic food groups mid-morning, mid-afternoon and before bed.

Parents need to remember that snacks do not equal sweets, and they should limit the amount of sweets a child eats. Sweets diminish a child’s appetite for more nutrient-dense foods. Sugar consumption is often blamed for hyperactivity; however, research indicates sugar does not cause hyperactivity. Hyperactivity can be caused by over-stimulation from a special event or lack of a

balanced diet. Dessert should be nutritious and offered as part of the meal. Using dessert as a reward or withholding it as punishment makes desserts seem special and reduces the appeal of other foods.

By letting children pick favorite snacks from the pyramid, putting a variety of them in a grazing tray that is easily accessible, and offering it at established times, parents can encourage appropriate snacks. Parents need to monitor how much and when the child is eating so the child isn't too full for food offered at mealtime. Snacks offered too close to meals decrease appetite.

Drinks

Water should be offered several times during the day to quench thirst. Milk should be offered at meals and snacks to ensure adequate calcium for bone growth. Children 1 to 2 years old need the fat in whole milk for brain development. After age 2, lowfat or fat-free milk should be served. Flavored milks are okay to offer if the child refuses milk and are preferred to sweetened beverages.

Juice should be offered only once a day and parents need to check labels to find 100% juice. Juice provides excellent nutrients, but too much decreases a child's appetite for other foods. Sweetened drinks like soft drinks and fruit-flavored drinks should be limited or avoided all together. They provide calories which greatly diminish a child's appetite.

Rising above advertising

Children see 20,000 to 40,000 television commercials every year and about half of them are for food. Food corporations spend billions on advertising and the heaviest advertising is directed toward young children. Commercials promote the 'nagging factor,' that encourages children to pressure parents to buy highly advertised foods that are often not the best nutritional choice. By being aware of this, parents can help children understand the truth about advertising. In the grocery store, parents can point out gimmicks like toys packaged in sugary cereal and the use of cartoon characters to sell products.

Offering new foods

Encourage variety in the child's diet. Parents should offer several choices, even foods they do not like. It may take 8 to 10 or more times offering a new food before a child will try it. Parents should set a good example and not force a child to eat a food the child doesn't like. The child will be more willing to try new foods if allowed to spit the bite into a napkin. The child may spit the food out several times before accepting it. This is all part of getting used to the new food. Meal choices should include at least one food the child likes and familiar food in case he/she does not eat the new food. Children need to be able to identify all the foods so it is best for parents to avoid "mystery" casseroles.