

Nutrition for kids

You want your child to eat healthy foods, but do you know which nutrients are necessary and in what amounts? Here's a quick overview of nutrition for kids.

Introduction; Nutrition for kids is based on the same principles as nutrition for adults. Everyone needs the same types of nutrients — such as vitamins, minerals, carbohydrates, protein and fat. Children, however, need different amounts of specific nutrients at different ages.

So what's the best formula to fuel your child's growth and development? Check out these nutrition basics for girls and boys at various ages, based on the latest Dietary Guidelines for Americans

- **Protein.** Choose seafood, lean meat and poultry, eggs, beans, peas, soy products, and unsalted nuts and seeds.
- **Fruits.** Encourage your child to eat a variety of fresh, canned, frozen or dried fruits — rather than fruit juice. If your child drinks juice, make sure it's 100 percent juice without added sugars and limit his or her servings. Look for canned fruit that says it's light or packed in its own juice, meaning it's low in added sugar. Keep in mind that one-half cup of dried fruit counts as one cup-equivalent of fruit. When consumed in excess, dried fruits can contribute extra calories.
- **Vegetables.** Serve a variety of fresh, canned, frozen or dried vegetables. Aim to provide a variety of vegetables, including dark green, red and orange, beans and peas, starchy and others, each week. When selecting canned or frozen vegetables, look for options lower in sodium.
- **Grains.** Choose whole grains, such as whole-wheat bread, oatmeal, popcorn, quinoa, or brown or wild rice. Limit refined grains.
- **Dairy.** Encourage your child to eat and drink fat-free or low-fat dairy products, such as milk, yogurt, cheese or fortified soy beverages.

Aim to limit your child's calories from:

- **Added sugar.** Limit added sugars. Naturally occurring sugars, such as those in fruit and milk, are not added sugars. Examples of added sugars include brown sugar, corn sweetener, corn syrup, honey and others.
- **Saturated and trans fats.** Limit saturated fats — fats that mainly come from animal sources of food, such as red meat, poultry and full-fat dairy products. Look for ways to replace saturated fats with vegetable and nut oils, which provide essential fatty acids and vitamin E. Healthier fats are also naturally present in olives, nuts, avocados and seafood. Limit trans fats by avoiding foods that contain partially hydrogenated oil.

If you have questions about nutrition for kids or specific concerns about your child's diet, talk to your child's doctor or a registered dietitian.

Ages 2 to 3: Daily guidelines for girls and boys

Calories 1,000-1,400, depending on growth and activity level
Protein 2-4 ounces
Fruits 1-1.5 cups
Vegetables 1-1.5 cups
Grains 3-5 ounces
Dairy 2 cups

Ages 4 to 8: Daily guidelines for girls

Calories 1,200-1,800, depending on growth and activity level
Protein 3-5 ounces
Fruits 1-1.5 cups
Vegetables 1.5-2.5 cups
Grains 4-6 ounces
Dairy 2.5 cups

Ages 4 to 8: Daily guidelines for boys

Calories 1,200-2,000, depending on growth and activity level
Protein 3-5.5 ounces
Fruits 1-2 cups
Vegetables 1.5-2.5 cups
Grains 4-6 ounces
Dairy 2.5 cups

Ages 9 to 13: Daily guidelines for girls

Calories 1,400-2,200, depending on growth and activity level
Protein 4-6 ounces
Fruits 1.5-2 cups
Vegetables 1.5-3 cups
Grains 5-7 ounces
Dairy 3 cups

Ages 9 to 13: Daily guidelines for boys

Calories 1,600-2,600, depending on growth and activity level
Protein 5-6.5 ounces
Fruits 1.5-2 cups
Vegetables 2-3.5 cups
Grains 5-9 ounces
Dairy 3 cups

Ages 14 to 18: Daily guidelines for girls

Calories 1,800-2,400, depending on growth and activity level
Protein 5-6.5 ounces
Fruits 1.5-2 cups
Vegetables 2.5-3 cups
Grains 6-8 ounces
Dairy 3 cups

Ages 14 to 18: Daily guidelines for boys

Calories 2,000-3,200, depending on growth and activity level
Protein 5.5-7 ounces
Fruits 2-2.5 cups
Vegetables 2.5-4 cups
Grains 6-10 ounces
Dairy 3 cups