

# Eating Guidelines for Increasing Your Child's Energy and Protein Intake (12 months - 4 years)

This fact sheet offers tips, snack and meal ideas for children who may need some help in getting enough calories to meet their energy needs. Remember, that every child is different and the amount of food that your child eats each day can vary depending on their appetite, activity level, how tired they are or whether they are having a growth spurt. If you are concerned about your child's weight or growth see your doctor or a dietitian.



## Steps you can take

1. Increase the calories in your child's diet by increasing the amount of healthy types of fat. Fat is a concentrated source of calories.

Nutritious sources of fat include:

- | Unsalted nuts and seeds and their butters such as chopped or crushed peanuts, cashews and sunflower seeds. Do not serve whole nuts or seeds to children under 4 because of the risk of choking.
- | avocado
- | full fat milk products such as cheese, yogurt and 3.25% homogenized whole milk
- | non-hydrogenated margarine
- | higher fat cuts of poultry, fish and meat such as dark meat from the chicken, salmon, and medium ground beef
- | vegetable oil such as olive and canola oil.

2. Increase the calories in your child's diet by increasing protein.

Protein rich foods include:

- | meats such as beef, pork, lamb or goat

- | chicken and turkey
- | fish such as salmon, tuna and trout
- | eggs
- | unsalted nuts or seeds and their butters
- | 3.25% homogenized whole milk, full fat cheese and yogurt, especially Greek
- | fortified full fat soy milk, soy yogurt and soy cheese
- | tofu, tempeh, TVP and other soy foods
- | beans, peas and lentils like kidney beans, chickpeas and brown lentils.

Food Group	Suggestions
Vegetables and Fruit	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>  Add a homemade cheese sauce or shredded cheese to vegetables or fruit.</li> <li>  Dip fruit in full fat yogourt.</li> <li>  Add non-hydrogenated margarine, oil or butter to vegetables.</li> <li>  Bake fruit into healthy desserts like muffins and fruit crisps.</li> <li>  Offer guacamole (avocado dip) or hummus with raw vegetables.</li> </ul>
Grain Products	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>  Add peanut butter, almond butter or tahini to toast, bread, crackers, pancakes etc. (Spread thinly. Thick nut butters can be a choking hazard for children under 4 years of age).</li> <li>  Add chopped or ground unsalted nuts to breakfast cereals. (Finely chop or crush whole nuts. Whole nuts are a choking hazard for children under 4 years of age).</li> <li>  Add peanut butter and other nut butters to hot cereal.</li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>  Add non-hydrogenated margarine, oil or butter to rice, pasta and other cooked whole grains.</li> <li>  Put cream sauces on pasta or noodles or rice.</li> <li>  Spread avocado on toast or crackers.</li> </ul>
Meat Alternatives	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>  Choose higher fat cuts of meat like medium ground beef, rib eye roast, and t-bone steak.</li> <li>  Offer chicken thigh or leg instead of breast meat.</li> <li>  Offer fattier fish like salmon, mackerel, trout, herring and sardines.</li> <li>  Add ground or finely chopped nuts to coatings for fried fish or chicken.</li> <li>  Add cream sauce or cheese sauce to meat, fish or poultry.</li> <li>  Try a tuna or salmon burger on whole grain bun.</li> </ul>
Milk and Alternatives	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>  Offer 3.25% homogenized whole milk instead of skim or 1%.</li> <li>  Offer high fat yogurt (at least 3% M.F.) or regular Greek yogurt instead of low fat options.</li> <li>  Add cheese to sandwiches, pasta and on top of vegetables.</li> <li>  Use cream in sauces, soups, batters, puddings, mashed potatoes, casseroles and cooked cereals.</li> <li>  Use 3.25% homogenized whole milk instead of water in recipes.</li> <li>  Add peanut butter or other nut butters to milk shakes, ice cream or yogurt.</li> </ul>

Ideas for fat and protein rich snacks:

- | Banana with peanut butter.

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- | Apple dipped in Greek yogourt.
  - | Trail mix with chopped or crushed nuts, seeds and chopped dried fruit. (Use chopped nuts and chopped dried fruit for children under 4 to prevent choking).
  - | Cheddar/mozzarella cheese on toast.
  - | Homemade granola bar or muffin.
  - | Hummus on whole grain crackers.
  - | Smoothie: 3.25% homogenized whole milk, Greek yogourt, peanut butter, blueberries.
  - | Guacamole on toasted pita triangles.
  - | Greek yogourt with fruit and chopped toasted almonds.
  - | Whole grain English muffin with almond butter.
  - | Oatmeal cookies with a glass of 3.25% homogenized whole milk.
3. Limit juice to 125-175 mL ( $\frac{1}{2}$ -  $\frac{3}{4}$  cup)/day.
- | Too much juice can fill up a small tummy, leaving less room for solid foods. If you choose to give your child juice, offer only 100% pure unsweetened fruit juice at the end of a meal or snack.
  - | Do not serve sugary beverages like fruit punch, fruit cocktail or fruit drink to your child. These are high in added sugar and low in nutrients.
  - | Water is the best fluid to offer your child between meals and snacks.
4. Offer milk and alternatives at meals or snack times.
- | Milk and fortified soy beverages are healthy drinks, but if your child fills up on these drinks she may eat less of her meals and snacks. Aim for at least 2 cups of milk (500 mL) each day. Once your child is 2 years old, you may offer a fortified soy beverage as an alternative to cow's milk.
  - | If your child likes to drink a lot, try offering milk at the end of the meal, once the meal has been eaten.
  - | Offer water if your child is still thirsty throughout the rest of the

day.

- | If you're breastfeeding, continue to do so for at least the first two years. Breastmilk is high in calories and other important nutrients. Offer breastmilk at the end of a meal or snack so your child is hungry for solid foods when she sits down to eat.

5. Limit foods that are low in nutrients and high in calories, saturated and trans fat, sugar or sodium.

- | These foods may fill up your child's tummy, without giving her important nutrients. Examples of low nutrient foods include:
  - | fruit drinks, pop
  - | packaged cookies, candies, cakes, chips
  - | hotdogs, deli meats and
  - | fast food.
- | Limit these foods to rare occasions. Instead, offer nutritious high calorie foods.

6. Set regular meal and snack times.

- | Offer 3 well-balanced meals and 2-3 snacks at regular times each day.
- | Give only water between meals and snacks.
- | Do not let your child eat between these times.
- | This will help your child come to the table hungry so she's more likely to eat.

A balanced meal includes foods from at least 3 food groups. A balanced snack includes foods from at least 2 food groups. The 4 food groups are outlined in Eating well with Canada's Food Guide available at [www.healthcanada.gc.ca/foodguide](http://www.healthcanada.gc.ca/foodguide)

7. Share the responsibility of healthy eating with your child: Offer healthy foods and then let your child decide how much to eat.

- | You decide what, when, and where food is served. Let your child decide if and how much to eat and drink.
- | Avoid pressure, praise, rewards, tricks or punishment. Pressuring

or bribing your child may make her less willing to eat.

- Keep mealtime pleasant and relaxed. Eat together as a family and turn the TV off.

## Special Considerations

### Liquid Supplements for toddlers

Most healthy toddlers do not need milk based liquid supplements such as Pediasure Complete, Enfamil Enfagrow and Gerber Graduates or Natrel's Baboo milk for healthy growth and development. Toddlers can get all the nutrients they need from a well-planned diet. Speak to your doctor or a dietitian before offering these products to your child.

### Vitamin and mineral supplements

Most children do not need a vitamin or mineral supplement even if their eating habits vary widely from day to day. Speak to your doctor or a registered dietitian before giving your child a vitamin or mineral supplement.

### Speak to your doctor or health professional

If you're concerned about your child's growth, talk with your doctor, public health nurse, or a dietitian. They can monitor your child's growth to make sure she is following a healthy pattern.



## Additional Resources

- Feeding Your Picky Toddler or Preschooler  
<http://www.pennutrition.com/viewhandout.aspx?Portal=UbY=&id=JMDqXwE=&PreviewHandout=bA==>

Feeding a Healthy Toddler (12 to 36 months old)  
<http://www.pennutrition.com/viewhandout.aspx?Portal=UbY=&id=JMzvWwO=&PreviewHandout=bA==>

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## Notes

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