Food Guide Pyramid for young children

How to use your daily food guide for children ages 2-6
What counts as one serving?

Grain Group

- 1 slice of bread
- 1/2 cup of cooked rice or pasta
- 1/2 cup of cooked cereal
- 1 ounce (one cup) of ready-to-eat cereal

Vegetable Group

- 1/2 cup of chopped raw/cooked vegetables
- 1 cup of leafy raw vegetables
- 6 ounces (3/4 cup) of vegetable juice

Fruit Group

- 1 piece of medium sized fruit or melon wedge
- 6 ounces (3/4 cup) of juice
- 1/2 cup of chopped, cooked, or canned fruit
- 1/4 cup of dried fruit

Milk group

- 1 cup of milk or yogurt
- 1 1/2 ounces of natural cheese (such as Cheddar)
- 2 ounces of processed cheese (such as American)

Meat group

- 2 - 3 ounces of cooked lean meat, poultry or fish
- 1/2 cup of cooked, dry beans
- 1 egg
- 1/2 cup tofu
- 2 tablespoons of peanut butter
- 1/3 cup nuts or seeds
- 2 1/2 ounce soy burger

Fats and sweets

- Limit calories from these food sources.
The American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP) does not recommend restricting fat in children under 2 years of age. Infants get all the fat they need from breast milk or formula, but as a baby switches to solid foods it is important to make sure that the child's diet includes enough fat. Good dairy choices for children at this stage include whole milk, full-fat cottage cheese and hard cheeses. (Note: do not give whole milk to children under 12 months of age because the mineral content is too high and cannot be fully digested by infants.)

The serving sizes suggested in the Food Guide Pyramid are appropriate for children ages 4 to 6. Offer smaller portions (about 2/3 of a serving) to 2- and 3-year-olds, except for the milk group. Two- to 6-year-old children need a total of two servings from the milk group each day.

In the grains section, choose whole grain products as much as possible. Whole wheat bread and brown rice contain more nutrients than white bread and white rice, for example.

Offer a variety of vegetables, from dark-green spinach, broccoli and romaine to deep-yellow carrots and squash. Also include legumes such as beans, lentils and split peas. Fresh fruits such as blueberries, cantaloupe, apples, bananas, oranges and watermelon are great choices for children.

From the milk group, offer milk, yogurt, cheese, ice cream, pudding and frozen yogurt. To reduce fat, choose low-fat milk and dairy products. The same rule applies to the meat group; offer lean meats like chicken and turkey, rather than high-fat choices like bologna or salami.

Remember that variety is the key to a healthy diet—for your whole family.