



## ARTICLE

# What should my child's meal plan consist of?

**Early childhood, which includes the preschool stage (2-5 years), is the phase of physical, emotional, and mental development and forms the foundation**

**6 mins read**

## **Balanced and Healthy Diet for Kids**

### **A balanced and healthy diet for kids with interesting foods**

Early childhood, which includes the preschool stage (2-5 years), is the phase of physical, emotional, and mental development and forms the foundation for the child's future well-being. A balanced diet for kids plays a vital role during this stage. A balanced diet for kids based on the food or beverage a preschooler consumes affects his/her health, which hence leads back to the conversation of healthy meals for kids. Children in the age range of 2-5 years have a daily energy requirement of approximately 1000 to 1400 calories per day, which is the mark of a healthy diet for kids.

To help support the [child's growth & development](#) during this phase of life, needs to consume healthy meals for kids. i.e. nutrient dense foods, hence, healthy recipes for kids should comprise of all the below mentioned food groups in the right amounts. Healthy diet for kids will substantially contain:-

#### **Cereals, millets and pulses**

- a. These are needed as they are an important source of energy and nutrients.
- b. Try and include whole grain products as part of their diet like multigrain cereals, whole wheat rotis, etc.

#### **Milk, egg and fish**

- a. Milk and milk products are an important source of calcium and protein. While the egg & meat products are a good source of protein & micronutrients too.
- b. The diet can comprise of some crud based smoothies, fruit yoghurts, egg rolls or sandwiches, lean meats like chicken and fish can be there as well as part of the diet.

#### **Vegetables and fruits:**

- a. Give your child fresh, seasonal and locally available fruits and vegetables
- b. Leafy green vegetables need to feature too as part of the diet may be in the form of spinach paratha, soups, add your veggies to the cereal preparations, like vegetable upma, pulao, khichdi etc.
- c. Carrots, cucumber, beetroot can form excellent finger food as salad sticks can be served to the child with exciting dips.

#### **Oils and fats:**

- a. Include vegetable oils, butter and ghee in small amounts in your child's diet.
- b. Nuts like walnuts, almonds need to be added to the diet. These can be in the form of crushed nut with milk or added to fruit custard to provide some crunchy texture.



### The right plan for healthy recipes for kids

The below table illustrates the food portions that are recommended [for children between 2-5 years of age](#) which will enable you to better understand & plan the [healthy recipes for kids](#) that you need to incorporate in your child's diet in the appropriate amounts, for a balanced diet for kids.

Also remember the key to get all the food groups as part of your balanced diet for kids is to include 3 main meals & 2 small meals as part of their diet. Use a variety of cooking methods like boiling, roasting, baking and steaming in order to introduce variety of foods to your child.

FOOD GROUPS	SERVINGS REQUIRED/DAY (2-3 YEARS)	SERVINGS REQUIRED/DAY (4-5 YEARS)	SUGGESTED 1 SERVING OF FOOD	Nutrients
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Cereals	2	4	1 small chapatti/1 small slice of bread/2 tbsp. of raw rice/2 tbsp. of raw pasta/2 tbsp. of raw dalia/2 tbsp. of sooji/2 tbsp. of raw oats	Cereals are an important source of energy, carbohydrate, protein and fiber, as well as containing a range of micronutrients such as vitamin E, some of the B vitamins, magnesium and zinc.
Pulses and legumes	1	1	2 tbsp. raw pulses/legumes	Pulses are source of protein, with a high fiber content seed/legumes will be much easier to digest and assimilate if sprouted.
Milk and milk product	5	5	1 small cup (100 ml) milk/ 1 small cup curd (100 g)/1/2 cup paneer	Milk and milk products are rich sources of calcium- good for bones, muscles and teeth
Roots and tubers	½	1	1 cup chopped raw potato/ beetroot/carrot/ turnips/onions etc.	Try to have baked/steamed potato instead of fried to ensure their health benefits.
Green leafy vegetables	½	½	1 cup chopped raw green leafy vegetables like Spinach/fenugreek/bathua/mustard leaves etc.	Try to incorporate Green leafy vegetables every day in different forms to keep your child healthy.
Other vegetables	½	1	1 cup chopped raw other vegetables (Lady finger, French beans, tomatoes, gourds, carrots etc)	Include seasonal and colorful vegetables to enjoy benefits of antioxidants.
Fruits	1	1	1 medium banana/1 apple/ pear/ orange/ 1 katori chopped papaya/ pineapple etc.	Go for a variety of seasonal fruits- rich sources of antioxidants, various vitamins and minerals.

Fats and oil	5	5	1 tsp of vegetable oil/ ghee/butter/ mayonnaise/ cheese spread etc.	Include healthy vegetable based oils as olive/mustard/rice bran/soybean etc. Avoid trans fats and saturated oils.
Sugar	3	4	1 tsp of table sugar/jaggery powder/ honey*/jam/ etc.	Try to limit sugary foods rich in trans fats and low in nutrients.
Meat/ chicken/ fish/ eggs	1	1	1 egg/ 1 piece of fish/2 small pieces of chicken/meat go for more lean meats	1 portion of pulse/legume may be exchanged with 1 portion of meat/ chicken/fish/egg Animal foods are rich in B-complex vitamins, iron, iodine and fat. Try to have either baked/grilled/steamed/ roasted chicken/meat or fish to enjoy maximum health benefits.

*\*Honey plays a crucial role in taste development, particularly in early life, as it introduces infants to a diverse range of flavors and helps shape their palate. However, honey can contain the bacteria that may cause infant botulism. Consequently, honey should not be introduced before 12 months of age unless the spores of Clostridium botulinum have been inactivated by adequate high-pressure and high-temperature treatment, as used by industry.*

*Whenever honey is used in our products, it undergoes an externally validated treatment that ensures our products are safe to consume.*