



Dear Parents,

Welcome to Team Nutrition, a nutrition education initiative brought to you by the United States Department of Agriculture's Team Nutrition and your child's school. The goal of Team Nutrition is simple—improve the health of children by encouraging them to eat healthy and be physically active. The four Team Nutrition messages are:

- Eat a variety of foods
- Eat more fruits, vegetables, and grains
- Eat lower fat foods more often
- Be physically active

You are your child's most important role model, and your help is needed for this initiative to succeed. Therefore, we have created parent pages, full of fun and informative activities you and your child can do together.

Healthful eating is important to you. After all, you want your family to have energy, be healthy, and stay well. You want your child to grow properly. You control family food choices more than you think.

GUIDELINES...FOR YOUR FAMILY'S HEALTH!

The **Dietary Guidelines for Americans** can be your family's guide to smart eating and active living. This advice is meant for anyone in your family, ages two and over.

<p>Aim for Fitness...</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▲ Aim for healthy weight. ▲ Be physically active each day. 	<p>Build a Healthy Base...</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Let the Pyramid guide your food choices. ■ Choose a variety of grains daily, especially whole grains. ■ Choose a variety of fruits and vegetables daily. ■ Keep food safe to eat. 	<p>Choose Sensibly...</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Choose a diet that is low in saturated fat and cholesterol and moderate in total fat. ● Choose beverages and foods to moderate your intake of sugars. ● Choose and prepare foods with less salt. ● If you drink alcoholic beverages, do so in moderation. (<i>This guideline is for adults in your family—not for kids.</i>)
--	--	--

This is the first of eight parent pages your child's teacher will photocopy and ask your child to bring home to you. Each page deals with a different aspect of nutrition, and is related to what your child learned in school.

What Are Children Eating Today?

- 35% of elementary school-age children eat no fruit, and 20% eat no vegetables on a given day.
- 27% of children 6-11 years old are considered obese.
- 12% of school-age children reported skipping breakfast.

Unfortunately, most children do not eat healthy and are not physically active according to the Dietary Guidelines listed above. Less than one in five children eats the recommended servings of fruit and vegetables daily. Team Nutrition needs you to join in and help kids eat healthy and get physically active.

Gardening Together

What's one of the best ways to help your child learn where foods come from? Of course—grow your own! Gardening shows your child how plants grow from seeds and what seeds need to mature into healthy plants. Here are some simple gardening activities children can help with and learn from.



GROW A CONTAINER GARDEN

Ready to dig into the soil? If you lack space for an outdoor garden, you and your child can have a small “container garden” on your back porch or city terrace. Leaf lettuce, radishes, and shorter varieties of tomatoes and carrots can all be grown in pots. Here’s how:

- Cover the drainage hole in the bottom of the pot with a flat stone. That keeps the soil from trickling out.
- Fill the container with soil almost to the top. For best results, use potting soil from a nursery or variety store.
- Dig holes for the seeds. Check the seed packet to see how deep to dig. (Save the seed packet. You’ll need information on it once it’s time to thin the young plants.)
- Place a seed in each hole. Gently pat the soil over each seed.
- Water lightly with a fine mist. The soil should be moist, not soaked.
- Check the seed packet for the amount of sun the plants need.
- Depending on the kind of seeds, they may take from 3 to 17 days to sprout. Once they do, pull out plants that are too close together, to give the remaining plants more root space.
- Remember that plants in **containers** depend on you for water and food (fertilizer). Keep the soil moist.

FEEDING YOUR GARDEN

Show your child how old food can be recycled to create new food for new plants by starting a compost pile that can “feed” your garden.

- You’ll need a leakproof container with a lid, such as a small garbage pail. Food scraps, except meat, bones, and grease, can go in the compost pile. Drain off any liquid, then add the scraps to the container and top with a thin layer of soil. You can also add decaying leaves to the pile. Add more layers of food and soil each day until the compost pile is about four inches deep. (Keep the lid on to keep animal scavengers away.) Now just stir the food-soil mixture daily and mist with water to keep it damp.
- After about a month, your composted matter will be ready to fertilize your garden.

BOOKS ABOUT PLANTING

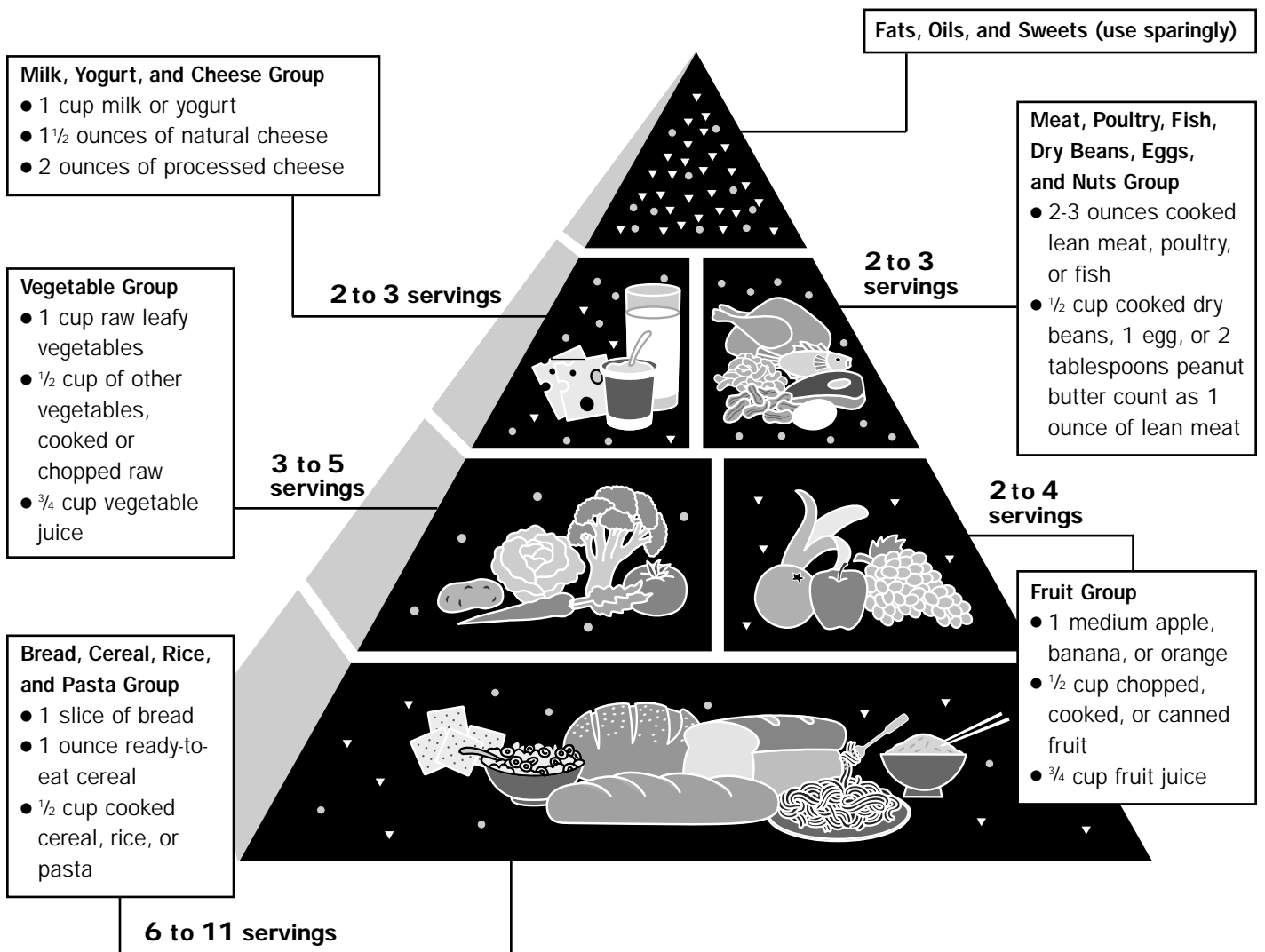
Two great books for curious young gardeners that describe the journey of food from seed to plate are *Where Food Comes From* by David Suzuki and Barbara Hehner (John Wiley & Sons) and *Growing Vegetable Soup* by Lois Elhert (Scholastic).

Building Healthy Meals & Snacks



The US Department of Agriculture's Food Guide Pyramid, which appears below, is a guide you and your family can use to assess your eating habits. It presents guidelines for choosing foods that provide the right balance of vitamins, minerals, and other nutrients and examples of typical serving sizes. With your child, you can create tasty menus that meet the goals you set based on the pyramid.

FOOD GUIDE PYRAMID: A Guide to Daily Food Choices



■ Remember! The calorie needs of elementary school children vary. Each day, your child should be eating the lower-to-middle number of servings suggested on the Food Guide Pyramid for each of the five major food groups.

KEY

- Fat (naturally occurring and added)
- ▽ Sugars (added)

These symbols show fat and added sugars in foods.

Roots, Stems, Leaves, Fruits, Flowers, & Seeds



Your child has learned that plants are the basis of the food chain. You can use the activities below to reinforce your child's understanding of the role plants play in the foods we eat. As a precaution, remind your child to never taste other kinds of plants without checking with an adult first.

PICKING PLANTS AT THE MARKET

The next time you're at the market with your child, point out foods that are examples of roots, stems, leaves, fruits, flowers, and seeds. For example:

- **Roots:** carrots, turnips, beets, radishes. If possible, look for examples with leafy tops, to remind your child that the part we eat grows underground.
- **Stems:** celery and asparagus
- **Leaves:** spinach, cabbage, kale, and all kinds of lettuce
- **Fruits:** apples, pears, plums, and mangoes
- **Flowers:** broccoli and cauliflower
- **Seeds:** corn, peas, dry beans, oats, and nuts

As you locate these items at the store, discuss with your child how each looks like a leaf, a stem, and so on. For example:

- Talk about how the root vegetables grow underground, just like the roots of plants at home or in the garden.
- Look closely at the broccoli florets. Point out how each is a bud, like a flower waiting to open.
- At home, you can cut open an orange and point out the seeds inside. Explain to your child that a fruit is any edible seed-bearing part of a plant.

CONSTRUCT A FANTASY PLANT

After you return from your shopping trip, challenge your child to use the various plant parts to construct a complete plant. For example, take a parsnip (a root), connect it to a piece of asparagus (a stem), add some sprigs of parsley (leaves), cherries (fruit), broccoli (flower), and finally a few grains of rice (seeds). Ask your child to draw a picture of your colorful creation as a reminder of the plant you created together.

ROOTS AND STEMS IN ACTION

Try this experiment, along with your child, to show how roots and stems pull water up into a plant.

- Take a stalk of celery (or a carrot) and cut off 1 inch from the bottom end.
- Place the stalk in a jar of water.
- Add food coloring to the water (blue or red are best) until the water becomes dark.
- Let the stalk sit in the water for 24 hours.
- With your child, look at the stalk the next day.
- Discuss the color of the leaves at the top of the stalk. Scrape the surface of the celery stalk with a knife—do you see the colored tubes? Discuss their role in “feeding” the plant. Cut the stalk in half and discuss what you see. Challenge your child to explain how the water reaches all the parts of the plant.

PLAN A PLANT PICNIC

You and your child can plan a picnic together that features an all-plant menu. Try to select foods representative of each plant part. For example, your picnic basket could include potato salad made with low-fat mayonnaise;



celery sticks; cauliflower florets; cole slaw (also made with low-fat mayonnaise); bread (challenge your child to explain how bread is made from plants); and rice cakes spread with a reduced-fat peanut butter and apples. Or you can simply pack one main item that includes all the parts—a big salad with radishes (roots), spinach (leaves), celery (stems), broccoli (flowers), and tomatoes (fruits), sprinkled with sesame seeds on top.

To drink, bring along fruit or vegetable juice, or try making iced ginger tea (just boil a bit of ginger root and sweeten to taste). If the weather permits, take your picnic outside and find a nice spot. If not, simply spread a blanket on your living room floor and dig in!

Get Energized!



Recent studies report that many children are not physically active on a regular basis. Encourage your child to become involved in sports activities available at school or in the community. At home, you can try some of the activities suggested below to help your child be more active, and to reinforce the link between the foods you eat, exercise, and good health.

GRAINS—THE FUEL FOOD

Grains (bread, pasta, or cereal, for example) are filled with complex carbohydrates, a great source of sustained daily energy. The Food Guide Pyramid recommends that children eat at least six servings of grains a day. Encourage your child to set a goal to meet this recommendation. Help your child meet this goal by trying new grain-based snacks together and keeping a log of the grains your family eats at home.

OUTDOOR FITNESS FUN

Children love to be outside, and doing an activity with you makes the experience even more special.

Try these fun fitness ideas together:

- **Go on All-Season Scavenger Hunts Challenge** your child to walk more by joining him/her on a scavenger hunt. Before you set out, write up a list of items that you can both look for. See who can locate these items the fastest. For example, try to find:
 - Items with different colors—red, orange, yellow, green, blue, or purple
 - Objects with a variety of textures—smooth, fuzzy, hard, soft, wet

You can take scavenger hunt walks together during every season. Winter, spring, summer, or fall, there's always something interesting that you and your child can discover. You can adapt your checklist of items appropriately.

For example:

- Look for human and animal tracks in the snow
 - Search for signs of spring in new flowers and buds on trees
 - Find interesting shadows on a sunny summer day
- Gather colorful leaves and acorns on a crisp autumn afternoon



INDOOR EXERCISE ACTIVITIES

Physical activity doesn't have to mean running, biking, or swimming. If the weather keeps you inside you can still keep fit.

- **Have a Dance Party** Dancing is a fun way to exercise and something fun that you and your child can do every day. Encourage your child to invent a dance to go along with a favorite song. Give your child the opportunity to be the teacher and instruct you in their new dance. Later, you can introduce your child to the dances you enjoy most, along with your own favorite songs.

- **Household Exercise Olympics** Many household jobs help to build strong bodies. Create your own Household Exercise Olympics. Together, you and your child can try the following "events":

- Raking leaves
- Shoveling snow
- Weeding the garden
- Dusting all furniture or washing all windows in a designated room

Try doing these activities in tandem. Afterwards, tally up the "medal" winners in each event and announce the top Olympian in your family at dinner that night.

RELATED READING

After exercising, you and your child might want to settle down and read a book together—try *Bread, Bread, Bread*, by Anna Morris (1989, Scholastic). Filled with lots of photos, it tells the story of the variety of high-energy grain-based breads found all over the world.

Understanding The New Nutrition Facts Label



The new Nutrition Facts label makes it easier for people to know what is in the food they eat. Comparing these labels will help you to know which foods have lower fat or fewer calories, which foods make healthy snacks, and which are acceptable for special diets. As a parent, use the new label to make informed food choices that will benefit your entire family.

Nutrition Facts This is the new label heading.

Calories Allows you to compare the calorie content per serving. When comparing similar foods be sure to check that the serving sizes are the same.

Nutrition Panel The nutrients required to appear on the nutrition panel are those most important to the health of people today, most of whom need to worry about getting too much of certain items (fat, for example), rather than too few vitamins or minerals, as in the past.

Conversion Guide Reveals the calorie value of the energy-producing nutrients.

Nutrition Facts

Serving Size 1 cup (228g)
Servings Per Container 2

Amount Per Serving

Calories 260 Calories from fat 120

	% Daily Value*
Total Fat 13g	20%
Saturated Fat 5g	25%
Cholesterol 30mg	10%
Sodium 660mg	28%
Total Carbohydrate 31g	10%
Dietary Fiber 0g	0%
Sugars 5g	
Protein 5g	

Vitamin A 4% • Vitamin C 2%

Calcium 15% • Iron 4%

*Percent Daily Values are based on a 2,000 calorie diet. Your daily value may be higher or lower depending on your calorie needs:

		Calories: 2,000	2,500
Total Fat	Less than	65g	80g
Sat Fat	Less than	20g	25g
Cholesterol	Less than	300mg	300mg
Sodium	Less than	2,400mg	2,400mg
Total Carbohydrate		300g	375g
Dietary Fiber		25g	30g

Calories per gram:
Fat 9 • Carbohydrate 4 • Protein 4

Serving Size Information
Serving sizes are given in both household and metric measures, and reflect the amounts people actually eat.

% Daily Value Shows how a food in the specified amount fits into the overall daily diet.

Reference Values This section helps you learn good diet basics. These figures can be adjusted, depending on a person's calorie needs.

Pyramid Snacks

Snacks are an important way to help children fill the hunger gap between regular meals. Make snacks count toward food group servings to ensure meeting the Pyramid recommendations. Plan for snacks, as mini-meals, to get a variety of different foods. Here are some ideas for snacks that you and your child can try out together:



SNACK MIX

Are you always on the go? Do you participate in active sports like hiking or biking? If so, then this mix is an ideal snack for you. It has only half the fat of a one-fourth cup serving of salted peanuts and 144 milligrams less sodium.

- Pretzels, unsalted 1 cup
- Roasted peanuts, unsalted 1 cup
- Raisins 1 cup
- Sunflower seeds, unsalted ½ cup

12 SERVINGS, about ¼ cup each

Per serving:
Calories 150

Total fat 9 grams

1. Break pretzels into bite-size pieces.
2. Mix ingredients together.
3. Store in airtight container.

SALSA

A fat-free, low-sodium vegetable dip that provides vitamin C and vitamin A too.

- 8-ounce can "no-salt-added" tomato sauce
- 1 tablespoon chili peppers, canned, drained, finely chopped
- ¼ cup green pepper, finely chopped
- 2 tablespoons onion, finely chopped
- 1 clove garlic, minced
- ¼ teaspoon oregano leaves, crushed
- ⅓ teaspoon ground cumin

SERVINGS, about 1 cup

Per tablespoon:
Calories 5

Total fat Trace

1. Mix all ingredients thoroughly.
2. Chill before serving to blend flavors.
3. Serve with toasted pita bread, breadsticks, or raw vegetable pieces.

CURRY VEGETABLE DIP

Dress up vegetables in a low-fat way.

- 8-ounce carton plain, low-fat yogurt
- ¼ cup carrots, shredded
- 2 teaspoons green onions, minced
- 1 tablespoon mayonnaise-type salad dressing
- 1 teaspoon sugar
- ¼ teaspoon curry powder
- dash pepper

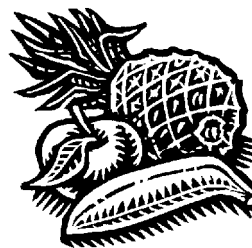
SERVINGS, about 1 cup

Per tablespoon:

Calories 15

Total fat 1 gram

1. Mix ingredients in a bowl.
2. Chill.
3. Serve with crisp raw vegetable pieces, such as celery, carrot, or summer squash sticks.



OTHER SNACK IDEAS

When your child wants something:

- **Juicy:** fruits
- **Crispy:** pumpkin seeds, carrot sticks, cucumber strips, toast, cereal mixed with nuts
- **For warmth:** soups, cider, or herbal tea
- **For thirst:** vegetable juices, or fruit and yogurt shakes

Supermarket Sleuths



Children are more willing to try new foods when they help to select them. Therefore, a trip to the supermarket is an excellent opportunity to expand the variety of foods your child is willing to eat, as well as an opportunity to learn more about making food choices for healthy eating.

To make the activity ideas below even more appealing to your child, you can both play detectives who use clues from the Food Guide Pyramid (Parent Reproducible 3) to choose foods at the supermarket.



PLAN OF ACTION

■ **Create a Shopping List** Before you take off on your shopping expedition, write out a shopping list together. This reinforces what your child is learning about different kinds of foods and how foods are grouped. First, write down all the “suspects” or items you will be looking for at the store. As you prepare this list, ask your child what he or she thinks the family needs. Then, challenge your child to organize the “suspects” by food group. Have him/her begin by writing all the grains (breads, cereals, rice, and pasta) you need; then listing the fruits, vegetables, dairy products (milk, cheese, yogurt, etc.), and finally all the meat, poultry, fish, eggs, dry beans, and nuts. Include a special “snacks” section on your list, where you both can list healthy snack alternatives.

■ **Get Those Groups** When you get to the store, ask your child to locate foods by food groups. Turn the shopping list over to him/her and suggest that he/she checks off each item as it goes into your cart.

■ **Wanted! New Foods** Pick a food group and ask your child to choose one or two new foods from this group for the family to try. It could be a new kind of fruit, a vegetable your child hasn't tried before, a new flavor of cheese, a type of dry bean you can use for soup or salad, an interesting shaped pasta, or a different kind of bread. You can decide on these new foods at home or wait to see what you find at the store. Have your child select a new item from a different food group on your next trip to the market together.



CONNECTING THE CLUES

While you are at the store, encourage your child to look for connections and make comparisons.

- Can the same food be found in different forms in the store? For example—vegetables can be purchased fresh, in cans, frozen, or as ingredients in soup. Ask if your child can find examples of other foods in various forms.
- Challenge your child to come up with a list of “clues” about his/her favorite foods. Then you can try and guess what they are.

■ **Take Your Shopping Cart Around the World** Browsing through a supermarket can help your child discover the wonderful variety of foods that are grown or produced throughout the world. Together, you and your child can plan to introduce the rest of the family to foods from other cultures. Before you go shopping, set goals to try new foods from other countries. Make a list of countries, and choose one dish from each. Write out the ingredients you will need to prepare these foods. This list can be used as a checklist each time you go shopping. When you are at the store, challenge your child to locate these items. When your family is eating this new dish, let your child announce what country it comes from.

To help monitor your travels, make a poster of the world to hang in your kitchen. As you and your child “travel” from continent to continent, sampling foods, fill in the different countries and the dishes you have tried together. See how long it takes to eat your way around the world!

FAMILY FOOD INVESTIGATION

Encourage your child to explore his/her food heritage. Suggest that he/she interview older family members about the foods they ate as children or their favorite foods now. Using all the information your child collects, you can make a family food tree that illustrates these special family foods. Discuss family recipes and make a shopping list for one of these recipes. Have your child track down the ingredients when you arrive at the store.