

Healthy Child Guidelines

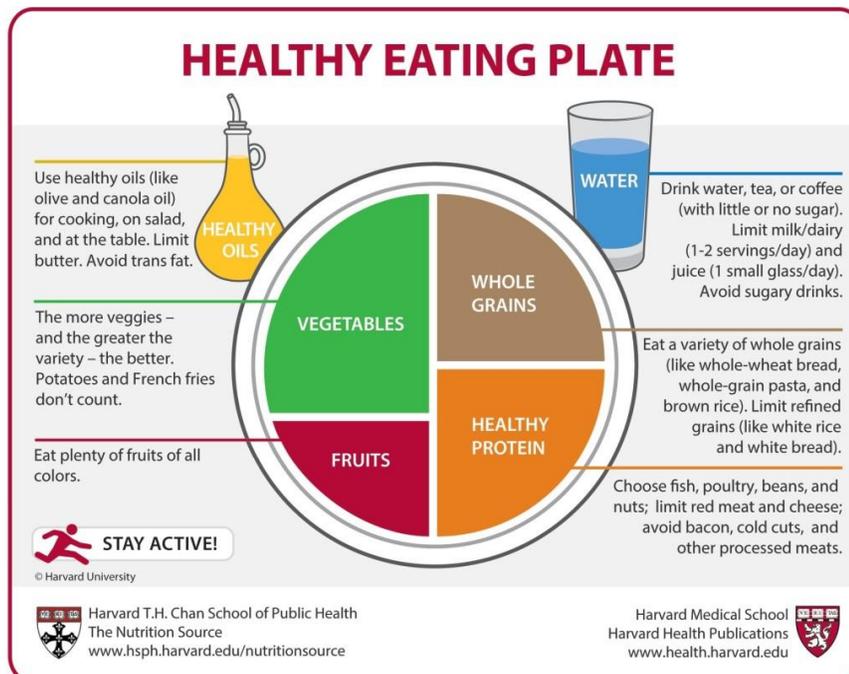
There is no better time to teach healthy eating habits than in preschool. Young children are still developing their tastes for foods. It is the adult's role (teachers and parents) to provide consistent opportunities to learn healthy habits and develop palettes geared to prefer healthy options. Our generation has seen first-hand the detrimental effects of high sugar, over-processed, and non-nutritive foods. While these foods are often easy and convenient, they have long-lasting, damaging effects on children's health both now and in the future. As adults, we can help to break the "sugar addicted" cycle for our own kids. It is our goal that the next generation have healthier standards for eating.

We highly recommend that lunches sent from home:

- Be diverse and include 3+ food groups such as fruits, vegetables, whole grains, seeds, protein, dairy, etc.
- Be sugar sensitive – **the American Heart Association recommends children consume no more than 4-6 teaspoons (or 19g) of added sugar per day** (Yikes! That's a tricky one!)
- Contain age-appropriate portion sizes
- Be cut into age-appropriate pieces to encourage self-feeding and prevent choking
- Avoid juices that are not 100% fruit or consider sending water or plain milk instead
- Contain minimal artificial colors as they are related to health and behavioral issues; consider limiting artificial ingredients as well as they have also been linked to health issues
- Not contain traditional "desserts" such as cookies, cake, candy, etc. *These items will be placed in your child's cubby to be enjoyed at home.*
- **Not contain nuts or peanuts in any form (due to high-risk allergies)**

With the exception of excluding traditional, sugar-laden desserts from daily lunches and high-level allergens such as nuts from our environment, we do leave nutritional decisions to the parents.

The following diagram illustrates our recommendation for Healthy Child Guidelines for lunches.



School Practices to Encourage Healthy Habits: Our Promise to Parents

School Policy	Meals and snacks are scheduled at regular times.
In Practice	Either a meal (3+ food groups) or snack (2+ food groups) is scheduled every 2-3 hours. The school provides 2 snacks per day. Lunch is provided or purchased by the parent. A child who forgets his lunch will be provided a lunch at the parents' expense.
Rationale	When children know that they will receive a snack or meal every 2-3 hours, they do not have to think about being hungry. Snacks provide 20% of a child's nutrition; thus, should be healthy.

School Policy	Children decide which foods they will eat from the foods offered. All foods sent from home should be healthy, so whatever the child chooses will be healthy. Every item should be a "first choice" item. If you don't want them to eat an item first, please reconsider sending that option.
In Practice	Family style meal times allow children to serve themselves from healthy options so they determine which foods to take and how much.
Rationale	Children gain independence in personal healthy eating habits when they can take ownership over their food choices (from an adult-provided selection).

School Policy	Children are not required to eat all the food on their plate/in their lunch box. Children will be encouraged to eat part or some of their lunch, and will be gently encouraged to try new foods. They will not be forced to eat if they don't want to.
In Practice	Food is served in a manner that allows children to serve themselves so they determine which foods to take and how much.
Rationale	Children need the opportunity to recognize their own feeding cues for hunger and fullness. Feeding problems arise when adults interfere with the child's decisions about how much or if they want to eat.

School Policy	Special occasions and holidays are celebrated with <i>mostly</i> healthy foods or with non-food treats. Shared treats must be store bought, and pre-approved by the classroom teacher.
In Practice	Please discuss healthier "treat" options for celebrations and birthdays with your child's teacher as he/she has an understanding of classroom-specific allergies, overall nutritional status, etc.
Rationale	We must consider health risks associated with food prepared in an unknown environment and the nutritional value of the food must be considered.

School Policy	Water is freely available both indoors and outdoors.
In Practice	Teachers will provide a water station in the classrooms. Parents may consider providing an appealing water bottle to encourage water consumption.
Rationale	Water is essential to health and should be promoted as the drink of choice.

School Policy	Juice will not be served with school-provided snacks or lunch. 100% fruit juice will may be reserved for special occasions.
In Practice	The school will serve water or low fat milk for snack and school-provided lunches. The daily value of juice should be left to parent discretion for lunch or at home.
Rationale	The Academy of Pediatrics recommends children ages 1 – 6 consume no more than 4-6 oz. per day due to high sugar content; juice should be 100% fruit.

School Policy	Daily play and planned movement experiences both indoors and outdoors are provided to children.
In Practice	Teachers will provide daily structured and unstructured activities that encourage movement and physical exercise. Parents are encouraged to engage their children in planned and unstructured physical activities (playing at the park, gymnastics, running, swimming, playing tag, etc.).
Rationale	Children need to be active frequently throughout the day. Children learn important motor skills during both structured and unstructured physical activity.

School Policy	Media is used only for educational purposes or on special occasions.
In Practice	Media time is sedentary and not conducive to social development. Limited media may be used to enhance the educational program.
Rationale	The American Academy of Pediatrics recommends no more than 2 hours of media/screen time per day. The majority of media time is best left to parents' discretion.

This information was recommended by the American Red Cross Preventative Health, Safety and Nutrition course and the California Community Care Licensing division. It was adapted from the handbook *Best Practices for Child Care Nutrition and Physical Activity Environments*; <http://www.healthybeveragesinchildcare.org/bestpractices/BestPracticesHandbook.pdf>