



Dietary Recommendations for Healthy Children

Like 178

Tweet 7

1.7K

Updated: Thu, 19 Apr 2012 12:43:00 PM



AHA Scientific Position

The American Heart Association has dietary recommendations for infants, children and adolescents to promote cardiovascular health:

Start in Infancy:

- Breast-feeding is ideal nutrition and sufficient to support optimal growth and development for about the first 4–6 months after birth. Try to maintain breast-feeding for 12 months. Transition to other sources of nutrients should begin at about 4–6 months of age to ensure sufficient micronutrients in the diet.
- Delay introducing 100 percent juice until at least 6 months of age and limit to no more than 4–6 oz/day. Juice should only be fed from a cup.
- Don't overfeed infants and young children — they can usually self-regulate the amount of calories they need each day. Children shouldn't be forced to finish meals if they aren't hungry as they often vary caloric intake from meal to meal.
- Introduce healthy foods and keep offering them if they're initially refused. Don't introduce foods without overall nutritional value simply to provide calories.

The American Heart Association recommends this eating pattern for families:

- Energy (calories) should be adequate to support growth and development and to reach or maintain desirable body weight.
- Eat foods low in saturated fat, trans fat, cholesterol, salt (sodium), and added sugars.
- Keep total fat intake between 30 to 35 percent of calories for children 2 to 3 years of age and between 25 to 35 percent of calories for children and adolescents 4 to 18 years of age, with most fats coming from sources of polyunsaturated and monounsaturated fatty acids, such as fish, nuts and vegetable oils.
- Choose a variety of foods to get enough carbohydrates, protein and other nutrients.
- Eat only enough calories to maintain a healthy weight for your height and build. Be physically active for at least 60 minutes a day.
- Serve whole-grain/high-fiber breads and cereals rather than refined grain products. Look for "whole grain" as the first ingredient on the food label and make at least half your grain servings whole grain. Recommended grain intake ranges from 2 oz./day for a one-year-old to 7 oz./day for a 14–18-year-old boy.
- Serve a variety of fruits and vegetables daily, while limiting juice intake. Each meal should contain at least 1 fruit or vegetable. Children's recommended fruit intake ranges from 1 cup/day, between ages 1 and 3, to 2 cups for a 14–18-year-old boy. Recommended vegetable intake ranges from ¾ cup a day at age one to 3 cups for a 14–18-year-old boy.
- Introduce and regularly serve fish as an entrée. Avoid commercially fried fish.
- Serve fat-free and low-fat dairy foods. From ages 1–8, children need 2 cups of milk or its equivalent each day. Children ages 9–18 need 3 cups.
- Don't overfeed. Estimated calories needed by children range from 900/day for a 1-year-old to 1,800 for a 14–18-year-old girl and 2,200 for a 14–18-year-old boy.



This eating pattern supports a child's normal growth and development. It provides enough total energy and meets or exceeds the recommended daily allowances for all nutrients for children and adolescents, including iron and calcium.

Dietary Recommendations for Children

[Nutrition Chart](#)

NUTRITION CENTER

- [Healthy Diet Goals](#)
- [Heart-Smart Shopping](#)
- [Healthy Cooking](#)
- [Recipes](#)
- [Dining Out](#)
- [Cookbooks and Health Guides](#)

Healthier Kids



Did you know that obese kids have an 80% chance of staying obese their entire lives? Find out what you can do to help your child live a stronger, healthier life.

[LEARN MORE](#)

Nutrition Center

Nutrition Center

Go directly to the section of interest.

- [Healthy Diet Goals](#)
- [Heart-Smart Shopping](#)
- [Healthy Cooking](#)
- [Recipes](#)
- [Dining Out](#)
- [Cookbooks](#)

[My Life Check](#)

[Life's Simple 7](#)



To find out where you stand with Life's Simple 7, take the [My Life Check Assessment](#). In just a few minutes, you can get your own personal heart score and life plan.

Daily Estimated Calories and Recommended Servings for Grains, Fruits, Vegetables, and Milk/Dairy by Age and Gender

	1 Year	2–3 Years	4–8 Years	9–13 Years	14–18 Years
Calories†	900 kcal	1000 kcal			
Female			1200 kcal	1600 kcal	1800 kcal
Male			1400 kcal	1800 kcal	2200 kcal
Fat	30-40% kcal	30-35% kcal	25-35% kcal	25-35% kcal	25-35% kcal
Milk/Dairy‡	2 cups¶	2 cups	2 cups	3 cups	3 cups
Lean Meat/Beans	1.5 oz	2 oz		5 oz	
Female			3 oz		5 oz
Male			4 oz		6 oz
Fruits§	1 cup	1 cup	1.5 cups	1.5 cups	
Female					1.5 cups
Male					2 cups
Vegetables§	3/4 cup	1 cup			
Female			1 cup	2 cups	2.5 cups
Male			1.5 cup	2.5 cups	3 cups
Grains_	2 oz	3 oz			
Female			4 oz	5 oz	6 oz
Male			5 oz	6 oz	7 oz

*Calorie estimates are based on a sedentary lifestyle. Increased physical activity will require additional calories: by 0-200 kcal/d if moderately physically active; and by 200-400 kcal/d if very physically active.

†For youth 2 years and older; adopted from Table 2, Table 3, and Appendix A-2 of the *Dietary Guidelines for Americans* (2005)14; <http://www.healthierus.gov/dietaryguidelines>. Nutrient and energy contributions from each group are calculated according to the nutrient-dense forms of food in each group (eg, lean meats and fat-free milk).

‡Milk listed is fat-free (except for children under the age of 2 years). If 1%, 2%, or whole-fat milk is substituted, this will utilize, for each cup, 19, 39, or 63 kcal of discretionary calories and add 2.6, 5.1, or 9.0 g of total fat, of which 1.3, 2.6, or 4.6 g are saturated fat.

§Serving sizes are 1/4 cup for 1 year of age, 1/3 cup for 2 to 3 years of age, and 1/2 cup for ≥4 years of age.

A variety of vegetables should be selected from each subgroup over the week.

_Half of all grains should be whole grains.

¶For 1-year-old children, calculations are based on 2% fat milk. If 2 cups of whole milk are substituted, 48 kcal of discretionary calories will be utilized. The American Academy of Pediatrics recommends that low-fat/reduced fat milk not be started before 2 years of age.

Popular Articles

- 1 [Understanding Blood Pressure Readings](#)
- 2 [Heart Attack Symptoms in Women](#)
- 3 [Heart Attack Risk Assessment](#)
- 4 [Warning Signs of a Heart Attack](#)
- 5 [What Your Cholesterol Levels Mean](#)
- 6 [BLS for Healthcare Providers - Classroom](#)
- 7 [What are the Symptoms of High Blood Pressure?](#)
- 8 [Good vs. Bad Cholesterol](#)
- 9 [BLS for Healthcare Providers Online Part 1](#)
- 10 [Advanced Cardiovascular Life Support - Classroom](#)

Related AHA publications/programs:

- [Understanding Childhood Obesity statistical sourcebook](#)
- [Diet and Lifestyle Recommendations for Adults](#)
- [AHA Nutrition Center](#)
- [Heart Disease and Stroke Statistics Update](#)
- [NFL PLAY 60 Challenge](#): an in-school physical activity program of the AHA and the National Football League

See also:

- [Cholesterol in Children](#)
- [Exercise \(Physical Activity\) and Children](#)
- [Fiber and Children's Diets](#)
- [High Blood Pressure in Children](#)
- [Infants and Diet](#)
- [Overweight in Children](#)

About Us

Our mission is to build healthier lives, free of cardiovascular diseases and stroke. That single purpose drives all we do. The need for our work is beyond question. [More](#)



Our Causes

- [Go Red For Women](#)
- [Go Red Por Tu Corazón](#)
- [My Heart My Life](#)
- [Power To End Stroke](#)

The Warning Signs

Our Sites

- [American Heart Association](#)
- [American Stroke Association](#)
- [HeartHub for Patients](#)
- [Everyday Choices](#)
- [My.AmericanHeart for Professionals](#)
- [Scientific Sessions](#)
- [Stroke Conference](#)
- [You're The Cure](#)
- [Global Programs](#)
- [Shop Heart](#)
- [CEO Nancy Brown](#)

Contact Us

Address

7272 Greenville Ave.
Dallas, TX 75231

Customer Service

1-800-AHA-USA-1
1-800-242-8721
1-888-474-VIVE

Local Info



Privacy Policy | Copyright | Ethics Policy | Conflict of Interest Policy | Linking Policy | Diversity | Careers
©2012 American Heart Association, Inc. All rights reserved. Unauthorized use prohibited.

*Red Dress™ DHHS, Go Red™ AHA ; National Wear Red Day® is a registered trademark.



This site complies with the [HONcode standard for trustworthy health](#) information: [verify here.](#)