

CHILD-1 Diet and Nutrition Recommendations

Childhood Nutrition Basics

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The CHILD-1 diet is the first stage of the Cardiovascular Health Integrated Lifestyle Diet and it can help you get your child's health on a better track. It is recommended for children with certain health conditions -- the diet can be a good idea for all kids, since it promotes healthy eating and a health weight. The diet was designed in mind for kids:

- with high cholesterol levels (dyslipidemia)
- who are overweight
- with high blood pressure
- with high-risk medical conditions, such as having type 1 or type 2 diabetes, having had a kidney transplant or heart transplant, chronic kidney disease, end-stage renal disease, or Kawasaki disease and still having coronary artery aneurysms
- with a family history of early cardiovascular disease, dyslipidemia (high cholesterol levels), obesity, primary hypertension, diabetes mellitus, or exposure to smoking in the home.

Most children with risk factors should transition to a CHILD-1 diet when they are two years old. Parents and pediatricians should then continue to reinforce CHILD-1 diet messages as these children get older.

CHILD-1 Diet

So what is a CHILD-1 diet?

The CHILD-1 diet works to:

- limit or avoid sugar-sweetened drinks
- encourage kids to drink water
- avoid trans fat
- encourage [high-fiber foods](#)¹
- limit sodium and avoid [foods high in salt](#)²
- encourage kids to drink fat-free unflavored [milk](#)³
- teach kids about appropriate [portion sizes](#)⁴, which will be partly based on the estimated number of calories they need each day based on their age, gender, and how active they are
- encourage daily physical activity
- limit cholesterol intake to less than 300 mg each day
- teach healthy eating habits
- encourage a DASH-type diet rich in [fruits](#)⁵, [vegetables](#)⁶, low-fat or fat-free milk and other dairy products, [whole grains](#)⁷, fish, poultry, beans, nuts and seeds, and lower in sweets and added sugars, fats, and red meats

You don't necessarily need to wait until your child is two to start CHILD-1 though. Part of the CHILD-1 recommendations are that infants should be exclusively breastfed until they are six-months-old, and should continue [breastfeeding](#)⁸ until they are 12 months old, even as they start eating solid foods.

CHILD-1 for Younger Toddlers

Although some of the CHILD-1 recommendations for infants between the ages of 12 to 24 months are a little technical, others are fairly simple:

- limiting juice to no more than 4 ounces of 100% [fruit juice](#)⁹ each day
- if not breastfeeding, consider transitioning to reduced-fat unflavored cow's milk, from 2% to fat-free milk, if your child is [overweight](#)¹⁰, at risk for obesity, or if he has risk factors for cardiovascular disease
- transition to table foods that provide 30% of their daily calories from fat, but only about 8 to 10% from saturated fat, with the rest coming from monounsaturated and polyunsaturated fats
- avoid trans fat

If your child doesn't have any risk factors, he can transition to fat-free milk when he is two-years-old.

CHILD-1 for Toddlers to School Age Kids

By the time your child is two, his or her primary drink should be fat-free unflavored milk.

As compared to infants, these older kids need a little less fat in their diet - about 25 to 30% of their total calories. The majority of those fats should still be monounsaturated and polyunsaturated fats though, with a smaller proportion of saturated fat.

This is a good age to start teach children about portions sizes and encouraging regular [physical activity](#)¹¹.

CHILD-1 for Preteens and Teens

In addition to continuing to drink fat-free unflavored milk, water, and limited amounts of sugar-sweetened drinks, older kids should be encouraged to follow healthy eating habits, such as:

- eating breakfast every day
- eating meals as a family
- limiting fast-food meals

Continuing to eat high-fiber foods, watching portion sizes, and being physically active every day are also still important at this age.

CHILD-1 Next Steps

It is important to keep in mind that CHILD-1 diet is just the first step for children with high cholesterol. If after a 3- to 6-month trial of CHILD-1 dietary changes a child continues to have high cholesterol, they should then be moved to a CHILD-2 diet with:

- only 25% to 30% of calories from fat
- less than or equal to 7% of calories from saturated fat
- about 10% of calories from monounsaturated fat
- less than 200 mg/d of cholesterol
- avoid trans fats as much as possible

And depending on their lipid profile, they should follow a CHILD-2-LDL vs. a CHILD-2-TG diet. The CHILD-2-LDL diet encourages the use of [plant sterols](#)¹², plant stanol esters, and water-soluble fiber psyllium to replace some fats in the child's diet. In contrast, the CHILD-2-TG diet encourages the replacement of simple sugars with [complex carbohydrates](#)¹³ and increasing [omega-3 fatty acids](#)¹⁴.

Keep in mind that a registered dietitian should likely help your child plan and follow their CHILD-2 diet, and may even be helpful for the CHILD-1 diet too.

Sources:

American Academy of Pediatrics. Expert Panel on Integrated Guidelines for Cardiovascular Health and Risk Reduction in Children and Adolescents: Summary Report. Pediatrics. Volume 128, Supplement 6, December 2011.

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