BEST PRACTICES
FOR HEALTHY EATING

Office of Child Nutrition
West Virginia Department of Education

LEAP OF TASTE

WV CHILD CARE NUTRITION STANDARDS

A GUIDE TO HELP CHILDREN GROW UP HEALTHY

Nemours | Health & Prevention Services

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Nemours Health & Prevention Services (NHPS), a nonprofit organization based in Newark, Delaware, works with families and community partners to help children grow up healthy. Our goal is to effect long-term changes in the policies and practices that promote child health and to leverage community strengths and resources to have the greatest impact on the most children.

NHPS is a division of Nemours, one of the nation's largest pediatric health systems, which operates the Alfred I. duPont Hospital for Children in Wilmington, Delaware, as well as outpatient facilities throughout Delaware, Pennsylvania, New Jersey, and Florida. NHPS expands Nemours' reach beyond clinical care to consider the health of the whole child within his or her family and community.

At NHPS, we see our role as "catalyst," planting the seeds for better health by working with community partners to reach children in a variety of settings. One of our initial areas of emphasis has been childhood obesity prevention through the promotion of healthy lifestyles, the centerpiece of which has been the 5-2-1-Almost None campaign. That means eating at least 5 fruits and vegetables daily, spending no more than 2 hours on screen time activities, getting at least 1 hour of physical activity, and drinking almost no sugar sweetened beverages.

In Delaware we have also partnered with the Delaware Department of Education and its Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP) to introduce best practices in child nutrition. We are very pleased that the West Virginia CACFP office is introducing these guidelines in your state.

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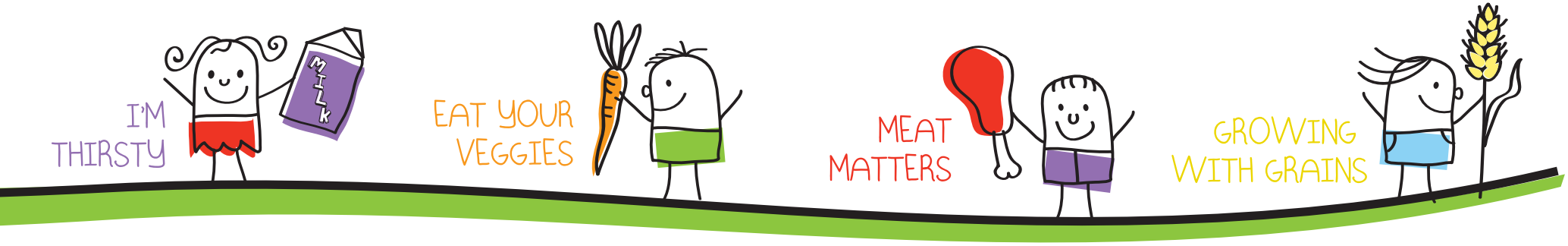


INTRODUCTION

Together with West Virginia's Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP), Nemours Health and Prevention Services (NHPS) is providing this best practice nutrition guide to help young children in our state develop healthy eating habits early in life.

In West Virginia, approximately 37% of our children are overweight or obese and are at high risk for developing serious health problems such as hypertension and type 2 diabetes. NHPS is joining with West Virginia's CACFP to develop programs that translate current research into best practices for our children.

Children who are given healthy food options during early childhood are more likely to continue healthy eating habits when they are older. You and your program play an important part in introducing your children to healthy food, by both providing nutritious food and teaching children how to make healthy food choices. By sharing information with families, you can work with them as partners to support healthy children.

The purpose of this guide is to provide you with information on how to help the children in your care grow up healthy. In this guide you will find:

- Healthy food guidelines for beverages, fruits and vegetables, milk, meats and meat alternates, and grains and breads.
- Portion sizes that are based on the CACFP reimbursable meal guidelines.
- Rationale for the recommendations.
- Sample policies that you can use in your program and with families to support your work.

Habits

Early

Hungry or Full?

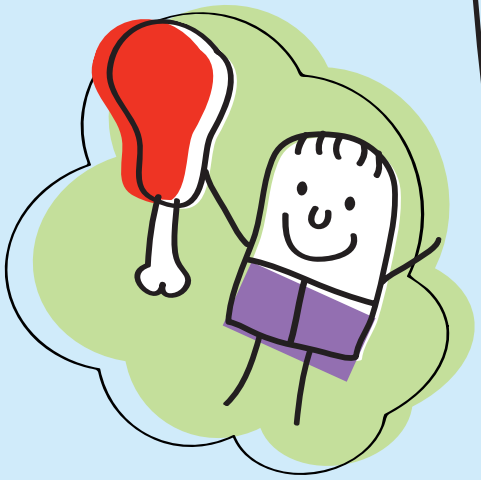
Most infants and young toddlers can figure out when they are full and stop eating if permitted. It's amazing to watch young children over the course of the week; they eat as much as they need to grow! However, as the toddler becomes a preschooler, we place more food on the plate and he can lose that sense of when to stop, and continues eating even when he is not as hungry.

For infants

- Look for hunger cues. Infants have different ways of showing they are hungry but common hunger cues include rooting or trying to put a fist in their mouth.
- When the infant cries, look to see what else could be bothering her before immediately feeding. An infant who cries may not be hungry. A need for sleep, affection or a diaper change may also be the cause.
- When the infant becomes distracted and sucking stops or becomes less frequent, take the bottle and see if he still roots for it. The infant may be using the bottle as a pacifier after he has fulfilled his hunger needs.
- Look for milk running out of the infant's mouth. An infant may let the bottle stay in her mouth even after she is full.
- It is not necessary to finish off a bottle, container of food or food on the plate. Even when there is an ounce left, if an infant is full, let him stop eating. If you are worried about wasting breast milk or iron-fortified infant formula, give smaller amounts and add more if the infant is still hungry.

Healthy

Start



For toddlers and older children

- Little tummies need small portions. Just like adults, when there is a large amount of food on the plate, children will eat it. Therefore, start small and ask them if they are hungry before serving or allowing second servings. This will also reduce food waste and save money!
- Serve family style – children will learn to put the right amount on their plates from the start.
- Create a positive eating environment by listening when a child says she is full. Discourage the "clean your plate" habit. A toddler may not say she is full, but she may start playing, become distracted, shake her head "no," close her mouth and refuse to finish the food on her plate.
- Sit with the children and let them see you eat when you are hungry and stop eating when you are full, even if there is food on your plate. Explain what you are doing.
- Complaints of being hungry, especially when a child has just eaten, may be due to other triggers such as boredom, TV advertising or seeing another person eating.

What about those "picky eaters"?

It is natural for children to be cautious with new foods. We know that for young children, it can take 10 to 15 times of actually putting the food in their mouths before they will come to like it. We also know that some children are especially cautious about trying new foods, while others use food as a way to be in control.

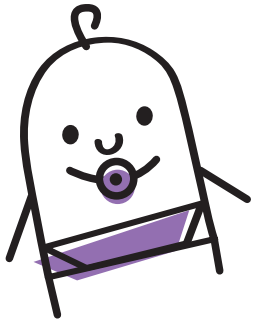
Use these strategies to create a positive environment and minimize the struggles for trying new foods.

For infants

- Don't be discouraged by a frown. Infants naturally prefer salty and sweet tastes, so for some fruits and vegetables, it may take 10 to 15 tries for a child to accept the new food. Don't give up.
- When offering a new food, serve the infant a food they are familiar with and like. You could try alternating bites between the new food and the familiar food.

For toddlers and older children

- Create a routine that everyone should try and taste new foods offered at your center. It's the rule at your table. However, do not force them to finish more than they want.
- Put a very small portion on the plate to try (like two peas). Young children may be concerned that they won't like the new food, so help them by putting a small amount on their plates – it looks less overwhelming.
- Always offer healthy foods or create a policy that requires parents to provide healthy foods in lunches and snacks – especially ensuring that parents provide plenty of fruits and vegetables.
- Avoid rewarding good behavior or a clean plate with foods of any kind. Especially avoid forcing a child to finish the "healthy foods" to get to their dessert or sweets – this can make the healthy food seem like punishment and force the child to eat when they are full.
- Offer desserts rarely so children do not expect them at every meal. When children come to expect dessert, they may not eat the healthier foods or they may see desserts as a reward for eating healthy food. By not having dessert as a regular option, you minimize this struggle.
- When introducing a new food, make it a game or lesson. Again, it can take up to 10 to 15 tries for a child to accept a new food. Try offering the new food outside the meal time. You can make it a classroom lesson and then have children who are interested in trying the new food take a taste and share their perceptions. This method creates a desirability to try the new food.



A Note on Breastfeeding

The American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP) recommends exclusive consumption of breast milk for at least the first four to six months of life. This is followed by the gradual introduction of solid foods beginning at age 4 to 6 months. Breastfeeding should still continue until 12 months of age or longer.

As a childcare provider, you can support breastfeeding by developing policies and practices to provide breast milk exclusively.