

Healthy eating tips for 2–5 year olds

Eating a wide variety of healthy foods is essential for normal growth and development.

Weight is a sensitive issue, even for small children. It is important your child does not feel they are being punished. The best way to do this is for the whole family/whānau to eat the same meals. It's easier to eat healthy meals and snacks if healthier foods are in your house. Here are some ideas to help you.

- Eat meals together as a family. Make sure the television and other screens are turned off.
 - Make sure your child eats breakfast every day. It's a great way to start the day. Good breakfast choices include grain cereals, such as wheat biscuits and porridge, whole-grain toast, fruit and reduced-fat milk.
 - Think about the size of meals. Could they be smaller? Reduce the amount you put on the plate over several nights so the whole family gets used to eating smaller meals.
 - Children are smaller than adults so don't need adult portions. Try using a smaller plate.
 - 2–5 year olds should aim for at least 2 servings of vegetables and 2 servings of fruit each day. Children over 5 years should try to have at least 3 servings of vegetables and 2 servings of fruit each day.
- Choose whole-grain breads instead of white breads.
 - Use margarine instead of butter and spread thinly.
 - Encourage your family to drink water or reduced-fat milk rather than soft drinks, cordials or sports drinks.
 - Choose reduced-fat milk and yoghurt for everyone in the family aged 2 years or older.
 - Reward your child with attention and hugs instead of food treats such as sweets.
 - Avoid cakes, biscuits, sweet muffins, lollies and chocolate.
 - Replace sour cream or coconut cream with reduced-fat unsweetened yoghurt, lite coconut cream, coconut milk or light evaporated milk.
 - Choose sandwiches, filled rolls or savoury bread cases instead of pies, pastries, potato chips and sausage rolls.
 - Fresh fruit, popcorn, a glass of reduced-fat milk or a small sandwich make great snacks.
 - Choose home-made burgers and oven wedges instead of commercial burgers, pizzas and fried foods.



For more advice on the types of food children need to eat to be healthy, see *Eating for Healthy Children: From 2 to 12 years*, available from healthed.govt.nz

For more tasty, easy (and healthy) meal ideas and recipes, go to myfamily.kiwi/foods