

Portions for Preschoolers



At child care, the amount of food served at meals and snacks depends on the age of the child. A reasonable portion for preschoolers is smaller than for teens or adults.

The chart below shows how portions compare for adults and preschoolers. It may not look like a lot, but the amounts shown below are just right for preschoolers' small stomachs and energy needs.

Examples of Portions for Adults and Preschoolers

	Preschooler	Adult
Breakfast	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ½ cup breakfast cereal flakes ½ cup sliced strawberries ¾ cup low-fat (1%) milk 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 1 cup breakfast cereal flakes 1 slice of whole-wheat bread ½ cup sliced strawberries 1 cup low-fat (1%) milk
Dinner	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 1½ ounces oven-baked chicken ¼ cup baked sweet potatoes ¼ cup cooked brown rice ¼ cup fruit salad ¾ cup low-fat (1%) milk 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 2 ounces oven-baked chicken ½ cup baked sweet potatoes ½ cup cooked brown rice ½ cup fruit salad 1 dinner roll 1 cup low-fat (1%) milk

Teaching Healthy Eating Habits

Offer preschool-sized portions, not adult portions. This helps your child learn to pay attention to whether he or she feels hungry or full. Smaller amounts help your child only eat what his or her body needs. If your child is still hungry, he or she will ask for more. When your child is served smaller amounts, less food is wasted.

Helpful tips for feeding your preschooler:

- Use smaller bowls, plates, and cups for smaller portions.
- Let your child practice serving himself or herself smaller portions.
- Do not force your child to finish everything on his or her plate.

Sample portion sizes by types of foods

At home, you can use the chart below as a general guide for the amount of a particular food to serve at meals. See the front page of this handout for information on how foods might be served together to make a meal. Children's appetites vary from day to day. Some days they may eat less than these portion amounts; other days they may want more.

	Preschool Portions
Dairy	$\frac{3}{4}$ cup milk $\frac{3}{4}$ cup yogurt 1½ ounces of cheese
Vegetables	$\frac{1}{4}$ to $\frac{1}{2}$ cup vegetables $\frac{1}{2}$ to 1 cup raw, leafy green vegetables (such as salad)
Fruits	$\frac{1}{4}$ to $\frac{1}{2}$ cup fruits $\frac{1}{8}$ to $\frac{1}{4}$ cup dried fruit
Grains	$\frac{1}{4}$ cup cooked rice or pasta $\frac{1}{2}$ slice of bread $\frac{1}{4}$ cup of cooked breakfast cereal $\frac{1}{2}$ cup ready-to-eat breakfast cereal flakes or rounds $\frac{3}{4}$ cup puffed ready-to-eat breakfast cereal
Protein Foods	$\frac{1}{2}$ to 1½ ounces lean meat, poultry, or fish $\frac{1}{2}$ to 1½ ounces of tofu $\frac{1}{8}$ to $\frac{3}{8}$ cup cooked beans 1 to 3 tablespoons peanut butter (spread thinly to prevent choking) $\frac{1}{4}$ to $\frac{3}{4}$ of a large egg

When planning meals and snacks, smaller stomachs need smaller portions.