



FIG 12-7 Preschool-age children enjoy helping adults and are more likely to try new foods if they can assist in the preparation.

The amount and variety of foods consumed by young children vary greatly from day to day. Consequently, parents sometimes worry about the quantity and quality of food preschoolers consume. In general, the quality is much more important than the quantity, a fact that should be stressed during nutritional counseling.

One way to reduce parental concern is advising parents to keep a weekly record of everything the child eats. In particular, the parents can measure the amount of food, such as setting aside a half cup of vegetables and serving the child from this premeasured amount, to provide a more accurate estimate of food intake at each meal. When parents look at the food record at the end of the week, they are usually amazed by how much the child has consumed. In general, preschoolers consume only slightly more than toddlers, or about half an adult's portion.

Sleep and Activity

Sleep patterns vary widely, but the average preschooler sleeps about 12 hours a night and infrequently takes daytime naps. Waking during the night is common throughout early childhood. An appropriate and consistent bedtime, nap schedule (as needed), and bedtime routine can help prevent and treat common sleep