

Obesity in young children has increased significantly over the past 3 decades, so efforts to provide a healthy diet and to encourage physical activity should begin early to help children achieve optimum health ([Rogers, Hart, Motyka, et al, 2013](#)). The 5-2-1-0 framework provides a foundation for patient education regarding healthy lifestyle choices. This framework refers to five or more servings of fruits and vegetables per day, 2 hours or less of screen time per day, a minimum of 1 hour of physical activity per day, and 0 (or limited) servings of sugar-sweetened beverages ([Rogers, Hart, Motyka, et al, 2013](#)).

Some preschoolers still have food habits that are typical of toddlers, such as food fads and strong taste preferences. When children reach 4 years of age, they seem to enter another period of finicky eating, which is generally characteristic of the more rebellious behavior of children in this age group. As with toddlers, small portions of each item being served should be offered. The practice of having children remain at the table until the plate is clean should be avoided, because this may contribute to overeating and the development of poor eating habits that contribute to poor health later in life. By 5 years old, children are more agreeable to trying new foods, especially if they are encouraged by an adult who allows them to help with food preparation or experiment with a new taste or different dish ([Fig. 12-7](#)). Mealtimes can become battlegrounds if parents expect perfect table manners.* Usually 5-year-old children are ready for the social side of eating, but 3- or 4-year-old children still have difficulty sitting quietly through long family meals.