

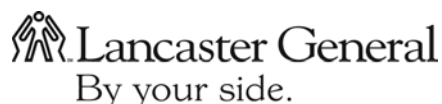
Nutrition for Your Child: Ages 6, 7, & 8 Years

Children ages 6 through 8 years old can begin to understand basic nutrition concepts, like “why” certain foods are good for their health. Parents are important teachers and role models because healthy food choices and eating habits begin at home.

Nutritional needs:

Children ages 6 through 8 years old generally need about 1200 to 1800 calories a day, but those who are very active may need as many as 2000 calories.¹ They can meet their basic nutritional needs by eating the types and amounts of foods listed below each day. The lower end of the range provides ~1200 calories, the higher end provides ~1800 calories. These are general guidelines only.

Food Group	Daily Goal	Tip
Grains:	4 to 6 ounce equivalents (1 ounce equivalent = 1 slice bread; ½ cup cooked cereal, rice, pasta; ¾ to 1 cup ready-to-eat low sugar cereal)	Offer whole grains half the time Examples: whole wheat bread, whole grain pasta, brown rice, oatmeal, whole grain barley, whole grain wheat flakes cereal
Vegetables	1-½ to 2-½ cups	Offer a variety of colors and types of vegetables daily
Fruits	1 to 1-½ cups (½ cup dried fruit = 1 cup fruit)	Make most choices fruit, not juice, preferably unsweetened
Milk	2 to 3 cups (1 cup yogurt or 1-½ ounces cheese = 1 cup milk)	Offer fat free or low fat types most often
Meats and Beans	3 to 5 ounce equivalents (1 ounce equivalent = 1 ounce fish, seafood, skinless poultry, lean beef and pork; 1 egg; 1 Tbsp. peanut butter; ¼ c. cooked dried beans)	Offer a variety of choices each week
Oils	4 to 5 teaspoons	Best sources are fatty fish, nuts, seeds, cooking oil (like canola, olive, and soybean oil)
Extra calories	180 calories	Best sources are extra foods from the 5 main food groups; limit added sugars
Water		Offer in place of sweetened drinks



Tips for feeding and helping your young school-age child eat healthy:

- Continue to maintain a “Division of Responsibility” in regard to feeding, but realize that as children mature, they can begin to take on more responsibility for *what to eat*.²
 - *Parents* are responsible for *what* foods and beverages are brought into the home, what foods are on- or off-limits for snacks, and what foods are served for family meals.
 - *Children* are responsible for *whether* to eat and *how much* to eat. Young school-age children can begin to make decisions about what to eat for snacks and for meals outside the home (like at school or at a friend’s home).
- At home, serve meals and snacks at the kitchen or dining room table; limit eating in other rooms of the house and while watching TV.
- Have family meals and keep mealtimes pleasant. Turn off the TV so you can enjoy being together. Ask your child what he’s learning in school about healthy habits and talk about it.
- Do not short-order cook for the child who refuses to eat what you serve for the rest of the family.
- Offer new foods often and encourage your child to try them. Perhaps have your child help you with grocery shopping and choosing new foods, especially new fruits and vegetables to try. Serve new foods initially as “side dishes” along with familiar foods.
- Ask your child to help you in the kitchen with age-appropriate tasks. Keep in mind that reading recipes and measuring ingredients is also great practice for reading and math skills! Teach her how to make simple snacks and meals, like cereal and milk, fresh fruit (washed first of course!), or string cheese and whole grain crackers. Begin to teach your child basic cooking skills, like how to use the stovetop to make pancakes, scrambled eggs, and stir-fry vegetables. Remind her to wash hands often. Teach safe food handling. Always supervise her when she uses kitchen appliances.
- Help your child start her day with a healthy breakfast which includes foods from at least 3 main food groups. If your child isn’t hungry in the morning, perhaps she is in the habit of eating most of her calories at evening meals and snacks. Encourage lighter evening snacks to break the cycle and increase her appetite for breakfast.
 - ready-to-eat whole grain cereal with skim milk and fresh, dried, or frozen fruit
 - peanut butter (or soynut butter) and banana or apple slices on whole wheat toast, skim milk
 - whole grain bagel or English muffin with low fat cheese, 100% fruit juice
 - whole grain muffins or pancakes (made ahead, stored in freezer, and reheated), fruit, skim milk
 - low fat yogurt topped with wheat germ, chopped walnuts, and fruit
 - instant oatmeal, fruit, skim milk
 - leftover hearty soup, brown rice & beans, or other main dish; skim milk
 - corn tortillas topped with shredded low fat cheese (microwave until cheese melts), fresh fruit
- Help your child decide whether she is hungry, full, thirsty, etc. (sensations) or happy, sad, angry, etc. (emotions). Do not use food to deal with your child’s emotions or to reward your child.
- Be a positive role model. If you eat and enjoy a well-balanced diet, try new foods, use polite table manners, and practice healthy eating habits, chances are that your child will learn to do the same.
- Be an advocate for healthy foods served at school, at before-and after-school child care programs, and at extracurricular activities.

References and resources:

1. MyPyramid: www.mypyramid.gov. Other government-sponsored nutrition information: www.nutrition.gov
2. Ellyn Satter, MS, RD, LCSW, BCD, books and Web site: www.ellynsatter.com
3. KidsHealth Web site; www.KidsHealth.org