

GROWING LEAPS AND BOUNDS[®]

SERIES: 11 OF 12



A GUIDE TO HEALTHY FEEDING AND PHYSICAL ACTIVITY FROM INFANCY TO PRESCHOOL YEARS

FABULOUS FOUR

Your four-year-old loves spending time talking to you, asking lots of questions, and sharing silly jokes. He is happy to help with simple household chores like feeding the dog and putting his clothes in the hamper. Your four-year-old knows which behaviors make you happy, and he seeks your love and praise.

Until Your Next Well-Child Visit...

- Continue to offer healthy foods, especially vegetables, in new ways during meals and snack times; make sure your child sees you eat them, too.
- Make sure your child gets at least 60 minutes of physical activity each day and continue to introduce new physical activities to your child. Limit sedentary activities.
- Have regular family meals and encourage your child to show good eating skills and manners.



Socialization

The dinner table is the perfect place for your preschooler to learn about the social pleasures of eating.

- 1 Family meals should be pleasant and relaxing experiences that include all family members whenever possible. Also, avoid fighting about food.
- 2 Continue to teach your preschooler about appropriate mealtime behavior, such as proper use of utensils and napkins.
- 3 Compliment your four-year-old on her eating skills and good manners at the table.
- 4 If your child says that she is full, let her stop eating but encourage her to sit at the table until everyone is finished. Family meals should last about 15 to 20 minutes.
- 5 Use this opportunity to talk about what each of you did that day. One good conversation starter is to ask each family member about the best part of the day.
- 6 Respect your child's food likes and dislikes. Try to serve at least two nutritious foods that she enjoys eating; however, don't force the issue of eating.
- 7 Serve foods family style and allow your child to put food on her own plate.
- 8 Offer and eat vegetables and other healthy foods at meals and snack times. Encourage your four-year-old to make a colorful plate by including lots of vegetables and fruit! Make sure the adults at the table eat their vegetables, too. It's a good example to set for your child.



Packing Lunch

A major milestone for many four-year-olds is bringing lunch to preschool, on a picnic, or to an activity away from home. Packaging and presentation make a big difference! When you are packing lunch, be mindful of the portion sizes – try not to overpack. Here are a few ideas for packing a lunch that will be eaten and enjoyed:

MAIN COURSE

- When making a sandwich, vary the bread and filling – wheat bread with peanut butter, pita with hummus, tortilla rolled with thin slices of cheese, bagel with reduced-fat cream cheese.
- Send a thermos-type insulated plastic container with warmed chili, soup, macaroni and cheese, or leftovers. Remember to include a spoon!

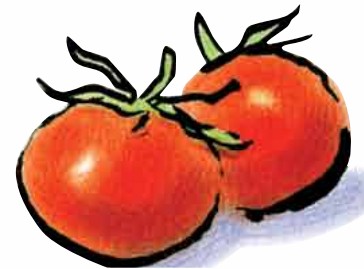


- Pack whole-grain crackers or pretzels with a plastic container of yogurt, peanut butter, or cottage cheese dip.
- Roll up slices of deli meat and cheese.



SIDE DISHES

- Pack vegetables every day. Kid favorites include baby carrots, broccoli florets, celery sticks, cherry or grape tomatoes, and pepper strips. These count too – vegetable or tomato juice, tomato soup, and salsa.
- Include fruit every day. Fresh fruit is fine, or send a single-serving cup of mixed fruit or applesauce.



DRINKS

- Pack a small bottle of water, a single-serving bottle or carton of fat-free or low-fat milk, or a box of 100% juice. Limit juice to four to six ounces per day.



SNACKS

- Add crunch with a small bag of pretzels, whole-grain crackers, or breakfast cereal.
- If sending a sweet dessert, keep portions small.

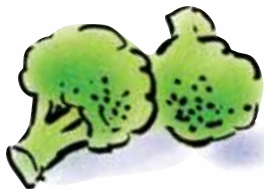


A FEW WORDS ABOUT FEEDING SAFETY

- Keep liquor bottles, medications, kitchen cleaning supplies, and sharp utensils like knives, kitchen scissors, and skewers out of your child's reach.
- Even though you and your four-year-old may be busy with activities, avoid eating in the car.
- Keep lunch cold at school by packing it with a frozen bottle of water or a gel pack.
- Use a lunch box or bag that can be cleaned every day, or use paper bags that your child can throw away. Replace your child's lunch box or bag when it cracks, tears, or cannot be cleaned thoroughly.

NOW WOULD BE A GOOD TIME TO...

- Talk with your child about foods that will help her grow up healthy and strong. Teach her the difference between "anytime" foods like vegetables and fruits and "sometimes" foods like sweet snacks.
- Make sure your child is getting enough bone-building foods like lowfat and fat-free milk and yogurt, lower fat cheeses, tofu with calcium, and broccoli.

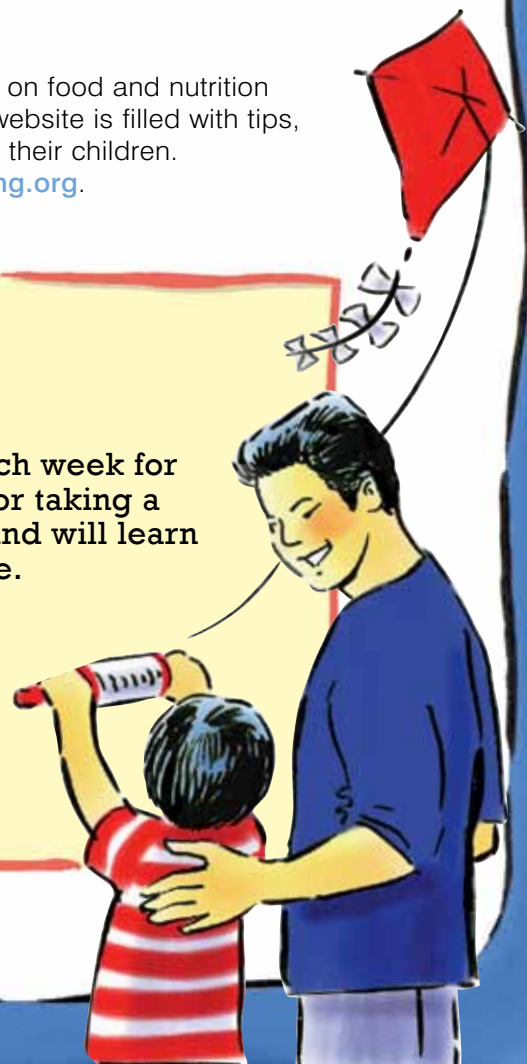


FROM THE DANNON INSTITUTE

Celebrate Healthy Eating is an education program on food and nutrition for young children. The Celebrate Healthy Eating website is filled with tips, recipes, information, and activities for parents and their children. To find out more, visit www.celebratehealthyeating.org.

HELPFUL HINTS

- Plan at least two special physical activities each week for the family, like going to a park, flying a kite, or taking a walk. Your four-year-old enjoys family time and will learn that physical activity is important for everyone.
- Reward your preschooler with "together time" that involves physical activity. For example, say to your child, "Pick up your toys and we can ride our bikes."



YOUR FOUR-YEAR-OLD IS BUSIER THAN EVER. HE LOVES PLAYING INDOORS AND OUTDOORS WITH HIS FRIENDS AND GOING TO MUSIC OR MOVEMENT CLASSES WITH OTHER FOUR-YEAR-OLDS.

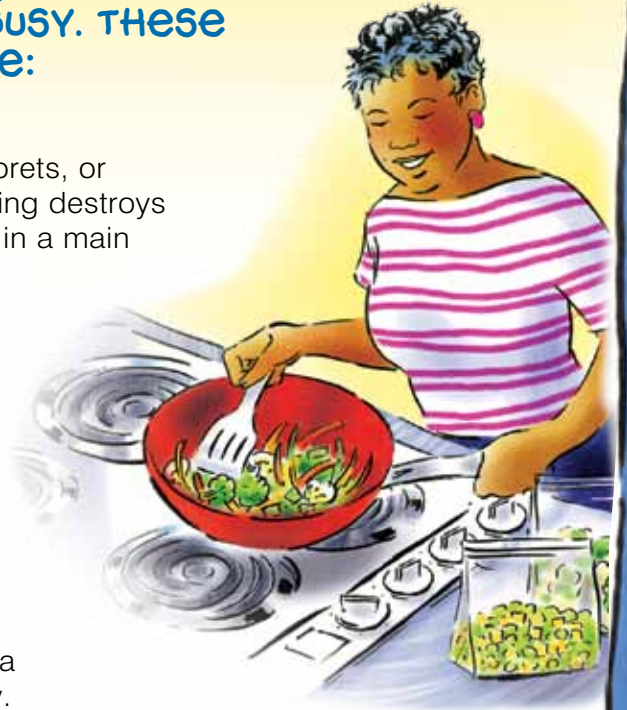
But you are as important as ever as a playmate and parent. Keep up your routine of at least 60 minutes of structured and unstructured activity per day! Allow your child to try out different activities, but don't over schedule!

- Go "exploring" or on a treasure hunt in your neighborhood. Four-year-olds love to find things to collect.
- Dance to lively music. Ask a grandparent to teach you and your child some of the dances that were popular when he or she was a child.
- Stock up on inexpensive outdoor toys like large balls, hula hoops, and chalk. Encourage your child to make up his own games to play.
- Pick up a set of child-size garden tools and let your child help plant flowers or vegetables.
- Use classic outdoor games like follow the leader to build physical skills – hop like a bunny, walk slow like a turtle, gallop like a horse.
- Praise your child's accomplishments by saying, "Wow, you threw that ball so far," or "You did a great job hopping from the tree to the garage."
- Teach your preschooler to use safety equipment, like a bike helmet and knee pads for skating and riding a scooter. And use them yourself as well!
- Visit a local playground. See-saws and other playground equipment help kids develop motor skills like balance and climbing.
- Turn off the television, computer, and video games. Children who spend less time in front of a screen or monitor are more likely to be active.



NOW THAT YOUR CHILD IS A BIT OLDER, YOUR DAILY ROUTINE IS DIFFERENT... BUT JUST AS BUSY. THESE MENU SHORTCUTS CAN HELP SAVE TIME:

- Purchase pre-cut vegetables like carrots, broccoli florets, or butternut squash. Steam, stir-fry, or microwave (boiling destroys too many nutrients) and serve as a side dish or use in a main dish or soup recipe.
- Stock up on quick-cooking grains, like "instant" brown rice, small pasta shapes, couscous, and rice noodles.
- Keep bags of frozen vegetable assortments on hand for a quick stir-fry.
- Puree canned beans with a bit of olive oil and seasonings like garlic or fresh basil to make great dips or sandwich spreads.
- Make eggs for breakfast, lunch, or dinner. They are a great source of protein that can be prepared quickly.
- Prepare twice as much lasagna, meat loaf, stew, soup, or casserole as you need. Divide the other half into smaller containers, label and date, and freeze or refrigerate.
- Start a meal exchange with other busy parents. Once a month, each of you cooks an extra meal or two and trades it with another family. You instantly have a few meals on hand and some extra time as well. Plus you add some variety to your menu.
- For quick, healthy recipes, visit www.5aday.org or www.eatright.org.



Always talk with your baby's doctor when you have questions about your baby's growth, development, and overall health. Ask which situations should prompt an immediate phone call, a visit to the office, or a trip to the emergency room.

The Dannon Institute is a non-profit foundation dedicated to promoting research, education, and communication about the link between nutrition and good health. "Growing Leaps and Bounds™" was created to help build a solid foundation of healthy eating and activity for your child, now and for the future. The Dannon Institute is supported by The Dannon Company, Inc.

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