

Healthy Eating and Active Living

For your 1 to 5 year old



What's Inside...



Healthy Eating and Active Living For Your 1 to 5 Year Old

Encourage Healthy Eating Habits

- Enjoy mealtimes 2
- Eating skills and changing behaviours 4
- Tips for choosing meals and snacks 5
- Juice: too much of a good thing 8
- Eating well together meal planner 9
- Common childhood feeding issues and solutions 10
- Vitamin and mineral supplements 12
- Food safety and your preschooler 13
- Fish and mercury 13

Encourage Your Preschooler to Be Active

- How much physical activity toddlers and preschoolers need 14
- How you can encourage your child to be physically active 15
- Keeping active together planner 17
- Physical activities your preschooler can do 18
- Movement abilities and activities for preschoolers 18

Build a Positive Body Image

- Things you can do to help your child 20

Is My Child Growing Well? 21

- Weight and body image 22
- What affects growth? 22

More Information

- Books 23
- Websites 23
- Contacts 23

Acknowledgements 24



Healthy Eating and Active Living For Your 1 to 5 Year Old

As a parent or caregiver, you influence a child from the moment they're born.

Young children learn by watching. They watch what you do. They watch family and friends. Then they imitate what they see, and the habits they learn in the early years can form a pattern that lasts a lifetime. The eating habits children learn in those first years have a lasting effect on how they grow and develop. When you guide your preschooler about what to eat and provide opportunities for them to be active, you help them to make and value healthy choices. Making healthy choices about food and physical activity helps children feel good about themselves. Most importantly, these healthy choices help them grow the way nature meant them to grow.

Usually, children from one to three years old are called 'toddlers'. From three until they turn six they're often called 'preschoolers'. To keep things simple, in this booklet 'preschooler' is used to mean children one through five years old. 'Parent' is used to mean parents, caregivers or anyone else involved in the care of a child.



Encourage Healthy Eating Habits

Enjoy mealtimes

We eat because our bodies need food, and we eat meals together so we can spend time together. Mealtimes are also a time for children to learn new skills.

Parents and children have different jobs when it comes to food and eating.

- Your role as a parent is to decide what, when, and where to offer food.
- Your child's role is to decide whether or not to eat, and how much to eat.

You have a job to do. Allowing your child to do theirs will help prevent feeding difficulties.

Parents decide **WHAT** foods to offer

- Parents do the grocery shopping. You are the one who decides what food is brought into the house and put on the table. So it's important to have healthy eating habits yourself and be a role model for your preschooler.
- Offer your child a variety of healthy foods. You'll find lots of healthy choices in Canada's Food Guide to Healthy Eating, which is available at www.hc-sc.gc.ca.
- Think about what your family likes to eat, but don't limit the menu to just what they're used to.
- Offer new foods, but just a small amount at first. It may take as many as 10 to 15 tries at different times before your child accepts a new food.



- Children like to eat with their fingers and that's perfectly okay! Serve food in a form they can handle themselves.
- Even small children can help in some way in making a meal. Get your child involved in helping, and they'll likely be interested in eating what they helped to make.

Parents decide **WHEN** to offer food

- Children need regular meals and regular snacks to grow well. That usually means three meals and two to three snacks a day.
- Plan and offer meals and snacks at regular times, then your child will be hungry when it's time to eat.
- Knowing that meals and snacks come at regular times helps your child feel safe about eating. They won't wonder when food is coming next, or want to keep eating through the day.
- Offer food and drinks at mealtimes and at snacktimes, but not in between. If your child is thirsty between meals or snacks, offer water.

Parents decide WHERE to offer food

- Children eat best when they sit down for meals and snacks, rather than running around.
- Sit down with your child and eat meals with them.
- Encourage a pleasant atmosphere. It's easier then for everyone to eat well and enjoy the meal.
- Turn off the TV and radio during mealtimes. This will help your preschooler focus on eating and learning eating skills.

Children decide WHETHER or not to eat

- Children's appetites change from day to day. Some days children seem to eat a lot. Other days they won't eat much. This is normal!

Children decide HOW MUCH to eat

- Children know when they are hungry and when they are full. Allow your child to leave the plate unfinished. Never bribe them to eat "just one more bite".
- Stay positive. Remember that trying to force a child to eat does not work.
- A child's portion tends to be smaller than an adult's. Children have small stomachs, so they need to eat small amounts more often.
- Your child's steady growth is the best way to tell that they are eating enough.





Eating skills and changing behaviours

Your preschooler will gradually become more skilled at chewing and swallowing and at using a spoon and fork. Here are some of the changes in eating skills and behaviours you may expect from your growing child.



From 12 to 18 months

- Eats a variety of nutritious foods
- Likes eating with hands
- Drinks from a cup
- Is awkward with spoon and fork
- Wants foods others are eating
- Tries different behaviours to see how you will react

18 months to two years

- Not as hungry
- Likes eating with hands
- Likes similar patterns and routine
- Likes trying foods with different textures
- Shows food likes and dislikes
- Is easily distracted
- Uses fork and spoon with more skill
- Has very clear ideas about eating or not eating

Two years old

- Definite likes and dislikes
- Can be very demanding
- Feelings of hunger decrease as growth slows down
- Dawdles over food at times
- Insists on doing things by themselves
- Likes to help in kitchen
- Holds glass or cup with one hand
- Better at chewing, but may still choke on certain foods
- Routines become more important

Three years old

- Improved appetite and interest in food
- Asks for favourite foods
- Likes shapes, colours, ABCs
- May demand only one regular food for a few days (food jags)
- Eats well with spoon and fork
- Chews most food
- Can pour liquids from a small jug
- May prefer raw vegetables to cooked
- Influenced by TV commercials, family, and friends

Four years old

- Is able to eat hard foods like popcorn and nuts
- Influenced by what friends are eating
- Uses fork and spoon easily
- Would rather talk than eat
- May continue to insist on only one regular food for a few days

Five years old

- Can feed themselves
- Prefers simple foods
- May have fussy eating behaviour
- Friends will really start to influence food choices



Tips for choosing meals and snacks

Plan meals and snacks according to Canada's Food Guide to Healthy Eating.

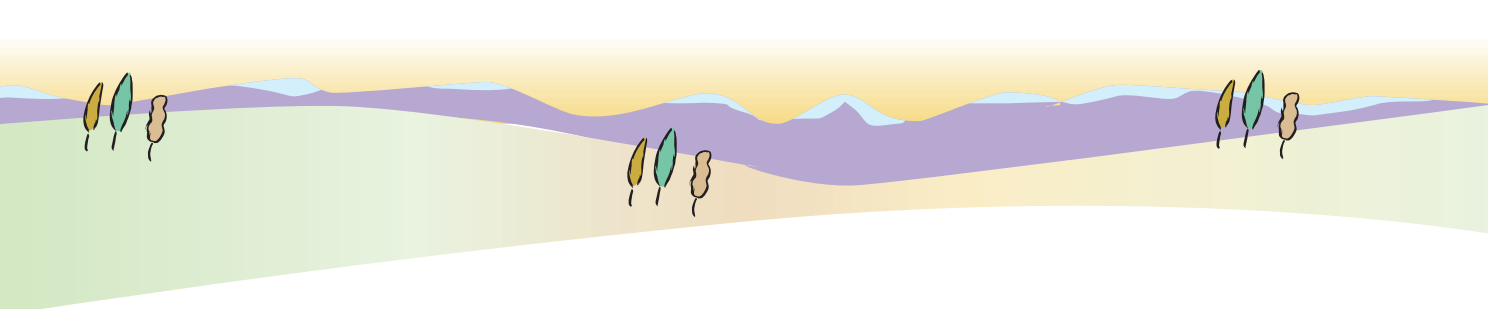
The following charts show the foods to offer every day, those to serve sometimes, and those to serve least often.

- "Serve most often" foods are healthy choices from the four food groups to serve every day.
- "Serve sometimes" foods are also healthy choices. But they may be lower in fibre, vitamins, and minerals and higher in sugar, salt, or fat.
- "Foods to serve least often" are foods that have a lot of sugar, salt, or fat and very little fibre, vitamins, or minerals. Use these foods occasionally, but not instead of choices from healthy food groups.

These charts are general guidelines. Use these along with your own best judgment. There's lots of information on food labels. You'll find reading labels will help you choose between similar kinds of foods.

To learn more about what's on food labels, visit the *Healthy Eating is in Store for You* website at www.healthyeatingisinstore.ca.





Serving sizes	Serve most often (use daily)	Serve sometimes
Grain Products		
<p>5-12 servings per day A preschooler serving is:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 1/2-1 slice bread • 75-175 mL (1/3-3/4 cup) hot or cold cereal • 50-125 mL (1/4-1/2 cup) pasta or rice • 1/4-1/2 bagel, pita, or bun 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Whole grain breads/toast/buns Whole wheat bagels/pita bread English muffins Whole wheat pancakes/waffles Whole grain pastas/rice/crackers Tortillas, rice cakes Unsweetened hot or cold cereals Roti 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Fruit crisps/cobblers Plain cookies (made with oatmeal, peanut butter) White bread/crackers Biscuits Low fat granola/plain granola bars
Vegetables and Fruit		
<p>5-10 servings per day A preschooler serving is:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 1/2-1 medium size vegetable or fruit • 50-125 mL (1/4-1/2 cup) fresh, frozen, or canned vegetables or fruit • 125-250 mL (1/2-1 cup) salad • 50-125 mL (1/4-1/2 cup) juice 	<p>Cut fresh fruit and vegetables into small pieces your preschooler can feed themselves¹. Try to choose fruits and vegetables that are more colourful (green, red, or orange). Limit juice to 125-250 mL (1/2-1 cup) unsweetened fruit/vegetable juice per day.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Raw vegetables Cooked fresh, frozen, or canned vegetables Fresh fruit Canned fruit or fruit cups in water or juice Unsweetened fruit sauces 100% pure fruit/vegetable juices 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Sweetened fruit juices/sauces Fruit in syrup Vegetables with sauces or breading Dried fruit or real fruit leathers³
Milk Products		
<p>2-4 servings per day A preschooler serving is:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 1/2-1 cup milk • 25-50 g (1-2 oz) cheese • 75-175 g (1/3-3/4 cup) yogourt • Breastmilk is also a source of milk products. • Whole milk should be used until age two. • Preschoolers should have at least 2 cups (500 mL) of milk every day. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> White milk (homo or 2%) Yogourt Cottage cheese Hard cheese <p>Soy beverages fortified with calcium and vitamin D may be used for children over age two².</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Homemade milk pudding Flavoured milks⁴ Custards Ice Cream Processed cheese slices

¹ Be aware of foods that can cause choking. Cut wieners and sausages into long strips, and then into bite-size pieces. Raw fruit: Remove pits, seeds, and peels and cut the fruit into bite-size pieces. Cut grapes in half. Cut raw vegetables into narrow strips, or grate the vegetables. Spread peanut butter thinly; never serve it right off a spoon.

² Speak to a registered nutritionist or dietitian or nurse at your local health centre for more information.

³ Avoid offering snack foods that are sticky and sweet such as dried fruit and candy. These can stick to the teeth and cause cavities (unless children brush their teeth right after).

⁴ Although the nutrient content is similar to white milk, white milk is lower in sugar and is a better choice than flavoured milks.

⁵ See "Food safety and your preschooler" (index page).

Serving sizes







2-3 servings per day

A preschooler serving is:



- 25-50 g (1-2 oz) meat, fish or poultry
- 1-2 eggs
- 50-125 mL (1/4-1/2 cup) cooked beans or lentils
- 50-100 g (1/4-1/3 cup) tofu
- 15-30 mL (1-2 Tbsp) peanut butter⁴

Serve most often (use daily)

Meat and Alternatives

















-  Beef, chicken, turkey or pork
-  Fresh or canned fish⁵
-  Eggs
-  Peanut/nut butters¹
-  Tofu
-  Legumes (dried peas, beans, lentils)

Serve sometimes

-  Low-fat deli meats
-  Low-fat wieners or sausages¹

Foods to serve least often

Limit choices to no more than 1-2 servings per week

-  Potato chips, cheese puffs
-  French fries
-  Instant packaged noodle soups
-  Chocolate, candies, marshmallows
-  Pop, fruit-flavoured drinks, iced tea, slush drinks, sports drinks
-  Flavoured milk/milkshakes
-  Ready-to-serve pudding cups
-  Fruit leather with sugar added (fruit roll-ups or fruit-flavoured gummy snacks)
-  Cakes, cookies, and granola bars with icing or chocolate coating
-  Flavoured jelly powder and sherbet
-  Sugar coated/pre-sweetened cereals
-  Fruit pie fillings
-  Cereal cream, whipping cream
-  Wieners, sausages, high-fat deli meats (salami), bologna
-  Deep fried or battered meat, poultry or fish
-  Cheese spreads

What else you should keep in mind

- Use margarine, butter, salad dressing, and sour cream in moderation.
- Limit salty foods. Use high-salt seasonings and condiments in moderation, and only after you've tasted the food to see if extra seasoning is necessary.
- Balance higher fat foods with lower fat foods. For example, avoid having higher fat choices such as pepperoni pizza, hot dogs and chicken nuggets all in the same week. When you serve higher fat choices, balance them with more vegetables and fruit.

Talk to your health care professional if you have concerns or questions about food allergies.

Caution! These foods can cause choking in children under three to four years of age:

- Popcorn, nuts, seeds and raisins
- Fish with bones
- Snacks using skewers or toothpicks
- Solid foods that are hard, small, and round, and smooth or sticky such as candies and cough drops

Juice: too much of a good thing?

Fruit juice tastes sweet, and most children love to drink it. Yet, too much can be harmful.

- A child who drinks too many sweet beverages such as fruit juice, fruity drinks and pop is filling up on sugar. Then they may not have enough room for healthy meals and snacks.
- Sipping sweet beverages all day can lead to tooth decay.
- Offer milk or juice in a cup, and only at planned meals or snacks.
- Offer water anytime throughout the day.

Remember to limit unsweetened fruit or vegetable juice to a maximum of 1/2 to 1 cup (125 to 250 mL) per day.



Choose 100% fruit juice or water, NOT fruit drink.

Juice	Drink
<p>Look for these words on the packet:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• unsweetened• pure fruit juice from concentrate• no artificial flavors or colors added• 100% juice	<p>Look for these words on the packet:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• drink• punch• -ade• beverage• cocktail <p>These have little or no fruit juice and are mainly sugar-flavoured water.</p>
<p>Real juice has more than 20 vitamins and minerals</p>	<p>Many fruit drinks are made to look like juice. But they are mostly sugar, water, and a little fruit juice. And they have very few, if any, vitamins and minerals.</p>



Eating well together meal planner

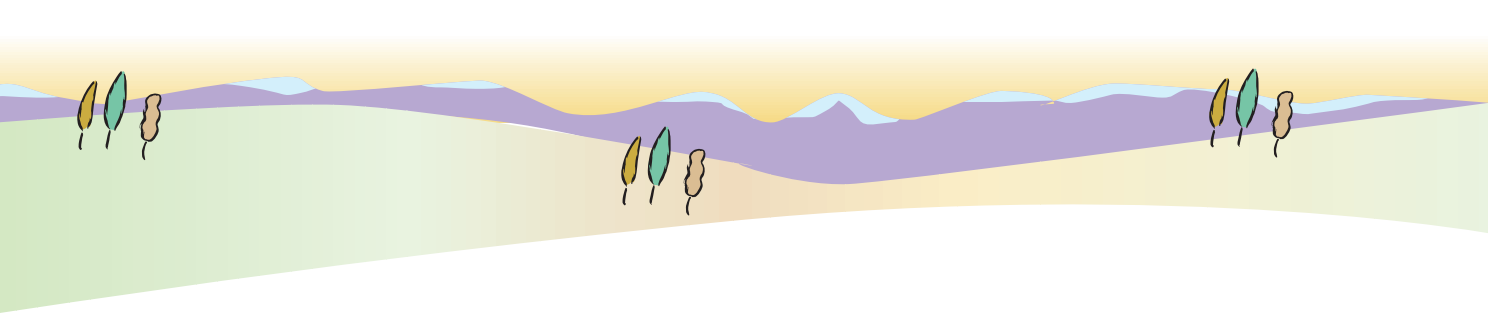
This meal planner gives a sample of a week of meals and snacks.

MEAL	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY	SUNDAY
BREAKFAST	French toast made with whole wheat bread Canned peaches Milk	Oatmeal Orange sections Milk	Cold whole grain cereal Apple or grape juice Milk	Bagel with peanut butter or light cream cheese Orange or apple juice Milk	Cold whole grain cereal Fresh or dried fruit Milk	Pancakes Fresh or frozen berries Syrup Milk	Scrambled or poached eggs Whole wheat toast & jam Apple juice
SNACK	Apple Cheese Whole wheat crackers Water	Bagel half with light cream cheese Grape juice	Banana Berry Wake Up Shake Pumpkin Raisin Muffins	Graham crackers Applesauce Water	Sunny Orange Shake Whole wheat crackers	Dry cereal mix Orange juice	Orange slices or banana Milk
LUNCH	Chicken or turkey with shredded lettuce & carrots in a pita or tortilla wrap Melon slices Milk	Tuna or egg salad sandwich Raw vegetables with Caesar or Ranch dressing dip Milk	Carrot or vegetable soup Hummus or peanut butter on pita bread triangles Pudding Milk	Macaroni and cheese Raw or steamed carrots & broccoli Oatmeal raisin cookie Milk	Chili (vegetarian or meat) Cornmeal muffins or whole wheat toast Frozen Yogourt Milk	Ham and cheese or peanut butter sandwich Fresh or canned fruit Milk	Ground beef or bean burritos stuffed with corn, lettuce, cheese & salsa Apple oatmeal cookies Milk
SNACK	Big-Batch Bran Muffins Apple or orange juice	Graham crackers Fresh or canned peaches or pears	Whole wheat crackers Kiwi halves Water	Banana yogourt Water	Bran, pumpkin or oatmeal muffin Apple or grape juice	Raw vegetables & breadsticks Caesar or Ranch dressing dip	Banana bread Milk
SUPPER	Broiled ham steak Scalloped potatoes Frozen corn Fresh or canned fruit Oatmeal cookie Milk	Hot 'n' Spicy Turkey Burgers with Sweet Potato "Fries"	Veggie Beef and Pasta Bake Mixed dark green lettuce salad Whole grain bread or rolls Milk	BBQ chicken Fresh, canned or frozen corn Whole wheat bread Milk	Polynesian Pork Kebabs Couscous or rice Apple Crisp Milk	Quick Steamed Fish Fillets with Potatoes & Asparagus Banana bread Milk	Baked chicken with pasta & prepared tomato sauce Steamed green beans Ice cream Water

You can use the meal planner as a guide to planning your own weekly menu. (You'll find a blank meal planner page at www.dietitians.ca/healthystart). You'll want to adapt the plan to your family's personal and cultural food preferences. To keep preschoolers satisfied, your daily plan should include three meals and two to three snacks. Snacks should include foods that might be missed at meals – vegetables and fruit, for example. Remember to allow two to three hours between the end of one meal or snack and the start of the next one.

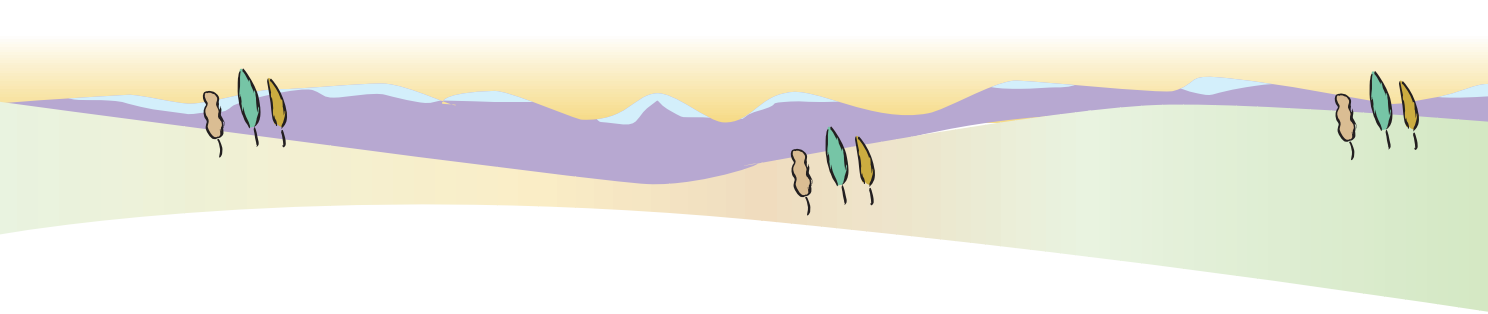
You'll want to be sure to:

- Choose a variety of foods from each of the four food groups every day.
- Include foods from at least three food groups in each meal.
- Include foods from at least two food groups in each snack.
- Remember to prepare foods safely. See the section on **Food safety and your preschooler**.



Common childhood feeding issues and solutions

<p>If your child wants the same food every day</p>	<p>Let your child have their "favourite food" as long as it is nutritious. Continue to offer other healthy choices at each meal. If a big fuss is NOT made your child will soon move on to another favourite food. Be aware that if preschoolers eat only a limited number of foods, their intake of important nutrients will be limited.</p>
<p>If your child takes too long to eat</p>	<p>Be patient and give your child time to explore, touch and taste their food. Young children need time to experience food, to eat and to learn how to use utensils. After a reasonable amount of time (20-30 minutes) remove your child's plate without a fuss.</p>
<p>If your child refuses to eat</p>	<p>Respect your child's awareness of their own body. A child's appetite can vary from day to day and from meal to meal so they may not be hungry. Serve smaller amounts of food. Make sure snacks are served well before meal times (e.g. one to two hours). Avoid becoming a short order cook – children should get used to sharing the family meal. A skipped meal every once in a while is not a concern as long as your child is growing normally.</p>
<p>If your child refuses to try new foods</p>	<p>Continue to offer "new" foods, and when you do, put small amounts on your child's plate. Some children need to see a "new" food many times before they will try and accept it. Encourage your child to try a small bite. Avoid forcing your child to eat a "new" food as this can reduce acceptance. Introduce "new" foods to your child when other children are eating and enjoying that food. Let your child explore and help prepare the "new" food.</p>
<p>If your child does not eat vegetables</p>	<p>Serve vegetables at snack time when your child is hungry. Offer a variety of brightly coloured vegetables so the child can choose what they like. Serve vegetables raw or lightly cooked (overcooking can make vegetables taste bitter). Be cautious serving raw vegetables to toddlers under three years old as they are at greater risk of choking. Purée or finely chop vegetables and put them in pasta sauce or soup. Involve preschoolers in choosing vegetables at the grocery store or market - or let them try growing their own garden.</p>



If your child does not drink milk	Offer small servings (125 mL or 1/2 cup) but don't force it. Preschoolers should have at least 500 mL (2 cups) of fluid milk each day to get enough vitamin D. Yogurt and cheese provide calcium but not vitamin D. Serve milk at a temperature your child likes. Use milk instead of water in cream soups, with pureed vegetables, in puddings and hot cereal. Talk to your family doctor or a registered dietitian before deciding if your child needs a supplement.
If your child drinks too much milk	Milk can be filling and may leave less room for other healthy foods. Determine how much milk your child drinks and limit intakes if your child is drinking too much. Aim for 2-3 cups (500-750 mL) per day. Do not give milk in a bottle. Milk should be served in a cup at set times such as at meal times.
If your child refuses to eat meat	Taste and difficulty chewing can turn some children away from meat. Make meat more appealing by cutting it into small bits and serving it in soups, stews, tomato sauce or meatloaf. Offer other protein foods such as eggs, fish, cheese, smooth peanut butter, soy foods, cooked dried beans or lentils. Increase iron intake by serving iron-fortified breads and cereals, dark leafy vegetables, eggs, cooked dried beans and lentils, and dried fruit such as raisins. Talk to a registered dietitian or your family doctor if your child does not eat any meat or dairy products. Your child may not be getting enough vitamin B 12.



Vitamin and mineral supplements

Vitamin and mineral supplements and other food supplements aren't needed if your child eats a variety of foods from each food group from Canada's Food Guide to Healthy Eating. Supplements don't take the place of food. They can't replace healthy eating.

Tips under "Common Childhood Feeding Issues and Solutions" help you make sure your child gets the nutrition they need from food. Sometimes, though, there are situations where a child may need a supplement. For example, if a child:

- hardly ever eats foods containing iron such as meats, iron-fortified breads and cereals, eggs, dried fruits, cooked dried beans or lentils and dark leafy vegetables
- follows a strict vegetarian diet or rarely eats meat or milk products

- usually drinks less than two cups (500 mL) of milk each day
- consistently refuses to eat any item from an entire food group

Your family doctor or a registered nutritionist or dietitian can help you decide if your child needs a supplement. Like any other pill, supplements can be dangerous if too much is taken. Be sure to keep them out of reach of children.



Food safety and your preschooler

As your child gets older they may start eating a greater variety of foods. And they'll also start trying to help around the kitchen. Here are a few reminders to help you keep you and your preschooler 'food safe' and healthy.

- Wash your hands to show your preschooler how to wash hands thoroughly.
 - Teach your child to wash their hands with warm, soapy water for at least 20 seconds before handling food, after using the bathroom or touching animals. Teach them to sing a song while washing their hands. A song like "Twinkle, twinkle, little star" is just about the right length of time. When the song is done, their hands should be clean.
- Take food off the table when the meal is over. Refrigerate whatever food may spoil as soon as possible.
- Wash kitchen and table surfaces every day.
- Use a clean cloth to wash your child's hands and face.
- Wash fruits and vegetables before eating them.
- Some foods are a high risk because they can contain bacteria that can make your child very sick. Don't serve the following foods to children:
 - Raw sprouts such as alfalfa and bean sprouts. Cooked sprouts are safe.
 - Unpasteurized fruit juice, milk, cheese (especially soft cheese or blue-veined cheese).
 - Raw eggs.
 - Uncooked dough or batter that contains raw eggs.

You will find more information on food safety at: www.canfightbac.org.



Fish and mercury

- Fish is an excellent source of protein and fats. However, certain fish may be high in mercury. Children are particularly sensitive to mercury. It may be harmful to their developing brains.
- Fish that are low in mercury include canned "light" tuna, and fresh and canned salmon.
- Canned "white" (albacore) tuna is generally higher in mercury than canned "light" tuna. Use "light" tuna for children.
- Young children should avoid eating fresh or frozen predatory fish such as tuna, shark and swordfish. These fish have higher levels of mercury. If you have questions about fish, contact your local public health centre for more information.

Encourage your preschooler to be active

It's healthy to be physically active throughout your life. People sometimes think young children are naturally active. But that's not so. Television, video games, and busy schedules can fill up a child's day. Then there's no time for physical activity.

Early childhood is the ideal time for your preschooler to be active. This is when they enjoy learning to run and jump and climb and play ball. This is where you, as a parent, play an important role. By making opportunities for your child to be physically active, you can encourage them to enjoy physical activity.

How much physical activity toddlers and preschoolers need

- Every day, toddlers need at least:
 - 30 minutes* of structured physical activity
 - 60 minutes up to several hours* of unstructured physical activity.
- Every day, preschoolers need at least:
 - 60 minutes* of structured physical activity
 - 60 minutes up to several hours* of unstructured physical activity.



Structured physical activity

- Games and activities you show your child or that you do with them. This helps your preschooler find out what they can do. It helps develop movement skills, and it also helps them learn to get along with others.

Unstructured physical activity

- Supervised time for your child to play actively alone or with other children. This is a physically active time when children decide what to do and how to do it. They might play inside or outside, on play structures, building forts, or by running and jumping. You may need to modify equipment to meet your child's interests and physical ability.

Physical activity is movement that works the body's muscles and uses energy. Active living is a way of life that values and includes physical activity every day.

* According to physical activity guidelines for children released by the American National Association for Sport and Physical Education publication "Active Start: A statement of physical activity guidelines for children from birth to five years," 2002.

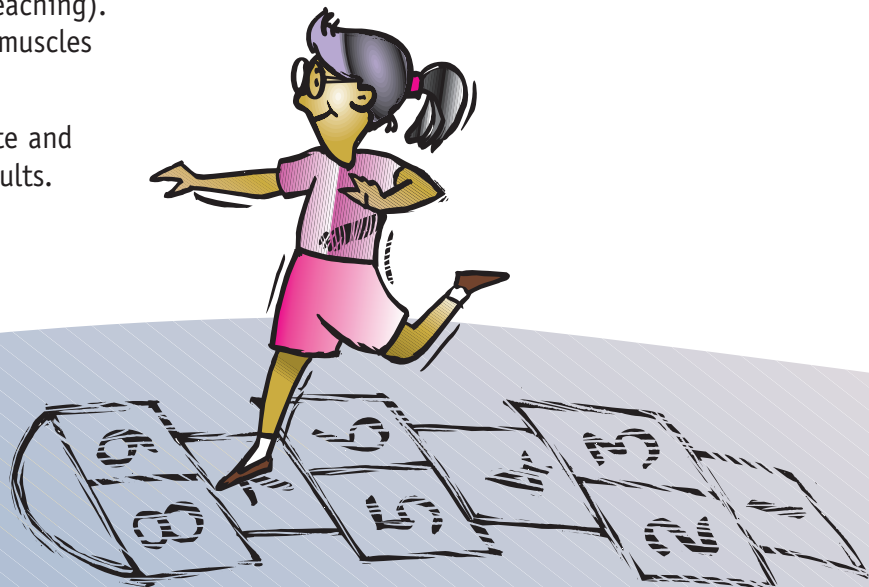
How you can encourage your child to be physically active

- 1) Make it fun!** Physical activity should be fun and it should be part of a child's daily life. Of course, children don't find physical activity fun when they "have" to do it. So encouraging active play is one way you can help your preschooler be physically active.
- 2) Build on movement skills.** Running, jumping, twisting, kicking, throwing, and catching are basic movement skills. Your child learns and develops them by practicing. These skills are the basis of movements that are more complex. And they're the foundation for lifelong physical activity. Begin each activity by asking your child to do something you know they can do well.
- 3) Plan a variety of activities.** Plan activities that fit your child's abilities and interests. You'll also want to suit them to the time of year and the resources available to you.
- 4) Praise efforts.** Praise and encouragement help your child feel good about themselves and about being active. Focus your comments on what they're doing well. Avoid being critical or negative.
- 5) Play along.** Take part in your preschooler's activities – at their eye level, when possible. A child's self-esteem and skills improve when adults take part in their play.
- 6) Increase preschooler's active time.** A simple way to encourage activity is to limit your child's TV viewing to just one hour a day.*
- 7) Take breaks.** A child who is being physically active or physical needs to take breaks for a drink of water and to cool down. So it's natural for your preschooler to want to take breaks between short bursts of activity.

Think of different activities that focus on:

- endurance (running, jumping, swimming strengthen the heart and lungs).
- flexibility (gymnastics and dancing encourage bending, stretching, reaching).
- strength (climbing builds strong muscles and bones).

Make it more important to participate and develop skills than to win or get results.



* A recommendation of the Canadian Paediatric Society "Pediatrics & Child Health", 2002.

8) Promote all types of physical activities for both boys and girls. Encourage all types of activities, whether your preschooler is a girl or a boy. Avoid comments about what little boys and little girls should or should not do. Introduce your child to women and men who are physically active. As a parent, you can be a role model yourself and show it's fun and enjoyable to be physically active.

9) Stay active in winter. Your child needs to be physically active every day, no matter what the weather. Dress for the weather or play indoors. Winter is a great time for your preschooler to explore new activities and games outside. Build snow sculptures or snow animals. Make snow angels, or patterns walking in fresh snow.

10) Keep it simple. Walking, playing, jumping, and climbing don't cost anything and are fun to do. Remember, your preschooler may be naturally better at one activity than others. Dress your child to be active: in shoes they can run in and clothes they can get dirty in. Provide a safe environment to encourage physical activity. Photograph your child being active and display the pictures. Plan outings that offer physical activity. Visit playgrounds, trails, parks. Go to community events that have physical activities for children.





Keeping active together planner

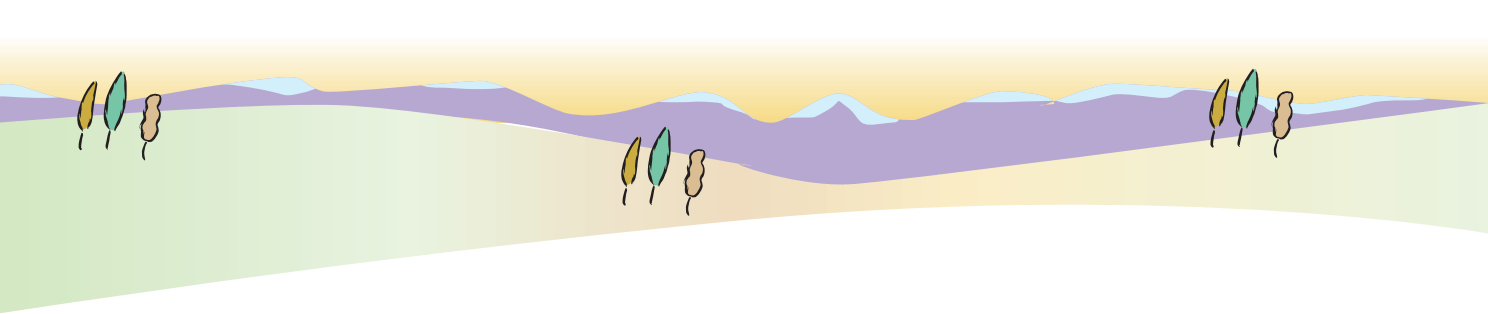
Use this sample activity planner as a guide for planning activities you can do with your preschooler. Adapt it to suit your schedule and activity preferences.

MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY	SUNDAY
Walk Indoor free play • <i>building blanket forts</i> 1	Tiny Tot Gym Class Outdoor free play 2	Walk Indoor free play • <i>stretching and moving exercises</i> 3	Rhythmical activities • <i>marching and moving to music</i> Outdoor free play 4	Walk Indoor free play • <i>big ball bounce activities</i> 5	Parent & Tot Swim Class Outdoor free play 6	Family outing • walking or hiking 7
Walk Indoor free play • <i>stretching and moving exercises</i> 8	Tiny Tot Gym Class Outdoor free play 9	Walk Indoor free play • <i>dancing making up your own dance</i> 10	Parachute or blanket games Outdoor free play 11	Walk Indoor free play • <i>outdoor playground climber</i> 12	Parent & Tot Swim Class Outdoor free play 13	Family outing • cycling or cross country skiing 14
Walk Indoor free play • <i>outdoor hopping and skipping games</i> 15	Tiny Tot Gym Class Outdoor free play 16	Walk Indoor free play • <i>marching and moving to music</i> 17	Obstacle & climbing course Outdoor free play 18	Walk Indoor free play • <i>bean bag toss and carpet games</i> 19	Parent & Tot Swim Class Outdoor free play 20	Family outing • picnic in the park 21
Walk Indoor free play • <i>freeze tag</i> 22	Tiny Tot Gym Class Outdoor free play 23	Walk Indoor free play • <i>outdoor playground climber</i> 24	Ball games Outdoor free play 25	Walk Indoor free play • <i>outdoor hopping and skipping games</i> 26	Parent & Tot Swim Class Outdoor free play 27	Family outing • skating or scavenger hunt 28
Walk Indoor free play • <i>dancing making up your own dance</i> 29	Tiny Tot Gym Class Outdoor free play 30	Walk Indoor free play • <i>big ball bounce activities</i> 31				

Bold type (black) = “Structured Activities” such as games and activities that you direct or do with your preschooler to keep them moving such as walking, exercising, bike riding, skating, gymnastics, dancing, active games, etc. These can also include activities that you might take your preschooler to.

Regular type (blue) = “Unstructured Activities” including supervised free time for children to play actively on their own or with other children. For example playing inside or outside on play structures, building forts, running and jumping, etc.

Italic type (green) = Other activities that can be done by preschoolers with their parents or child care providers.



Physical activities your preschooler can do

The kind of things a child can do depends on their age and stage of development. There is a basic pattern to the way children develop. But within that pattern, children grow and develop at very different rates. The physical skills and abilities of each child are just as different. So an activity one child likes may not appeal to another. It's important to plan activities for your preschooler that fit their abilities and their interests.

Activity planning is a way to help you fit activity into your busy day by:

- helping you plan regular opportunities for active play.
- helping you make sure your preschooler is active every day.
- helping cut down on inactive time. That's the time spent on things like television watching and computer games.

Movement abilities and activities for preschoolers *

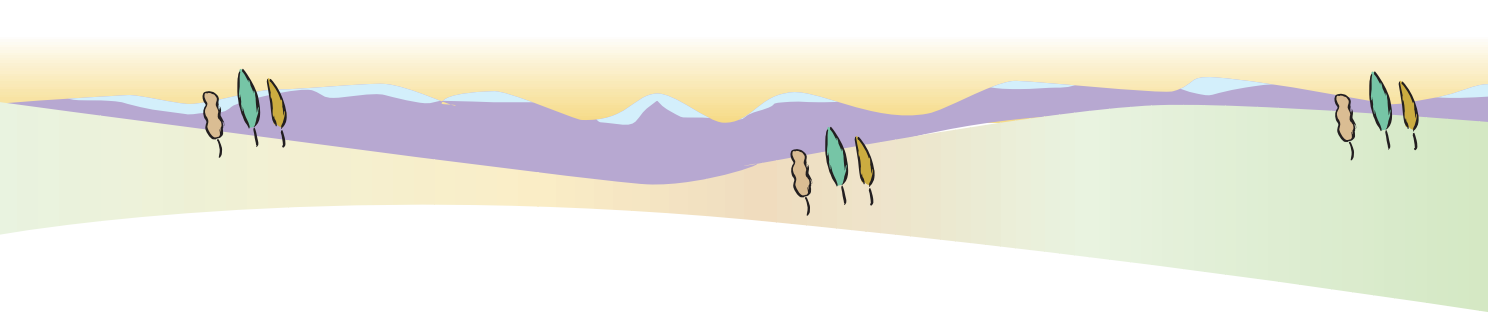
Children age 2 to 3 are just beginning or are able to:

- Walk forward and backward, run and jump, and climb up and down stairs
- Walk along a balance beam or board with or without help
- Throw a ball or bean bag using two hands
- Kick a large ball without losing balance, or runs after it and stops it with two hands before kicking again
- Hit a suspended ball with a large bat
- Crawl and climb up and through play structures and household furniture
- Sit with balance on a swing, while being gently pushed from behind by an adult
- Sit on and skillfully move a riding toy, pushing with two feet

Activities suitable for children age 2 to 3 include:

- Stop and go, walking and running games; tag
- Balance beam (not more than 25 cm off ground)
- Follow the leader obstacle course
- Ball play; throw and retrieve, ball kicking
- Hitting and batting
- Ice skating with assistance
- Water play and swimming
- Rhythm, music and dance
- Marching band, rhythmical activities, hopping and singing games

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Children age 3 to 4 are just beginning or are able to:

- Walk forward and backward with varying speed and in different directions
- Walk balanced on tip toes
- Jump with increased skill over objects and in combination with walking or running
- Catch a large ball
- Kick a ball with more accuracy and retrieve it with two hands while the ball is in motion
- Hit a ball off batting tee with large bat
- Climb with coordination, balance and a firm grip on large play structure
- Pedal and maneuver a tricycle, big wheels, or small two-wheeled bicycle with or without training wheels
- Swim moving arms and kicking feet, while firmly supported under hips and chest by adult

Activities suitable for children age 3 to 4 include:

- Walking and running games; tag
- Jumping over a line
- Balance beam – not more than 50 cm or waist height off the ground (hold hand or stand – beside child for safety)
- Throwing and catching
- Hitting and batting
- Kicking to a partner and retrieving
- Ice skating
- Play structure or obstacle course with ladders, tunnels, ropes, balance board
- Swimming, parents and tot swimming classes
- Rhythm, music and dance
- Blanket and parachute games

Children age 5 to 6 are just beginning or are able to:

- Walk, run, and jump well
- Climb big play structures to their own comfort level
- Catch and throw large and small objects with improved accuracy
- Develop hand-eye coordination
- Develop spatial awareness – how the child judges movement in relations of objects and people
- Develop the concept of teamwork but game skills are not developed
- Respond readily to rhythm and music
- Desire vigorous activity but this may lead to carelessness, especially with others
- Tire easily but recover quickly

Activities suitable for children age 5 to 6 include:

- Running and skipping
- Gymnastics and martial arts
- Ropes, bars and climbers
- Games with objects of various sizes, shapes and textures such as balls, beanbags, scoops, and bats
- Games with a minimum number of rules and instructions
- Small groups games emphasizing cooperation rather than competition
- Ice skating
- Swimming
- Cross country skiing
- Rhythm movement including walking, marching, clapping and running
- Strenuous activities with rest and water breaks

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Build a Positive Body Image

Body image is what you think you look like and how you feel about that perception. Having a positive body image makes you feel good about yourself. It gives you a feeling of general well being and it gives you positive self-esteem.

It is important to encourage your child to have a positive body image.

Sad to say, many people have a negative body image. Sometimes, they have false ideas about their body size. No wonder! Messages all around us make us want to have an unrealistic, "ideal" body. To encourage a child to have a positive body image, we need to teach them how to look after their body. That means they need to learn to eat healthy foods and live actively. They need to be able to handle stress and they need to learn to communicate effectively.

Things you can do to help your child

- Help your child understand that people come in all sorts of shapes and sizes. Accept your child the way they are, tall or short, large or small. Don't make critical comments about their body, or the way they look.
 - Children come to feel loved and accepted by being loved and accepted by people they look up to. Help your child feel wanted, valued and loved.
 - Be aware of the unspoken messages you send. Take care not to criticize your own body. Watch what you say about the way other people look.
- Enjoy your child's unique personality and make sure you let them know you do. Focus on their strengths and abilities, not physical appearance.
 - Help your child develop their particular skills and interests. Encourage hobbies, friendships, and activities.
 - Find an activity your whole family enjoys. Then be active together. Show your child you think physical activity is important and that you enjoy it. Being physically active is one of the best ways of developing a positive body image.
 - Help your child develop skills to deal with teasing and bullying. Explain that teasing about appearance is not okay.
 - Encourage healthy eating habits in order to be healthy – not just to lose weight.
 - Manage television viewing in your home. Teach kids to think critically about what they see and hear, talk with your child about unrealistic images and messages. You can make a difference.





Is My Child Growing Well?

Young children are unlikely to have their self-esteem strengthened by flattery. Children can see through it and may even dismiss an adult who heaps praise as a poor source of support, one who is not believable.

As a parent, you influence your child at every age. One of your roles as a parent is to encourage your child to feel good about their body. As a child grows, their size and shape change. Find out what these normal stages are before you start to worry or become critical about your child's weight. Focus on encouraging your child to feel good about themselves. Help them develop a positive attitude. Positive self-esteem is essential to feeling good about your body.



Your child may be taller, shorter, lighter or heavier than other children of the same age.

This is because children come in many different sizes and shapes. Each child has their own pattern of growth that is natural for them.

If you worry your child is growing too slowly or too fast, ask your family doctor or public health nurse about it. Ask them to look at your child's growth records and take new measurements. The pattern of growth is more important than a single measurement. If there is a change in the pattern, it's important to find out why. Then you can get the proper help to prevent health problems now and in the future.

If your child is gaining weight too quickly, the goal is to slow down weight gain.* But it is important that growth in height continues normally. Follow the healthy eating and activity guides in this pamphlet.

If your child isn't gaining weight or height as expected, the information in this pamphlet is still suitable.* However, you may also need to offer healthy foods that are higher in energy (calories) more often. This includes things such as peanut butter, full fat cheese, eggs, whole milk.

Do not put a child on a weight loss diet. Severe exercise programs for your child are not advised.

* Ask to speak to the registered nutritionist or dietitian or nurse at your local community or public health centre. Tell them you have concerns about your child's eating and growth, and ask them for more information.

Weight and body image

More children than ever before are overweight. An overweight child tends to have a more negative body image than other children. Media messages and comments from peers and others sometimes play a part in this. Overweight children are at higher risk of developing eating disorders.

If your preschooler is a large-size child:

- Encourage healthy eating habits by offering healthy choices. Be a role model by eating healthily yourself.
- Encourage your child to be active. And do it for fun, not for weight management.
- Help them to accept their body shape. At the same time talk with them about ways of dealing with teasing and bullying.

www.bullyfreealberta.ca

What affects growth?

Genetics: Ethnic background; family and parents' growth history; parents' size and shape.

Age: Peak growing periods are in infancy and puberty; slower growth periods in childhood.

General health: Medical conditions; illnesses; medications.

Gender: Boys and girls grow differently at different times.

Eating habits: Types of foods eaten; amounts eaten; how often.

Activity level: Amount of activity; the type; how often.

Everyone benefits from following healthy eating habits. From being physically active. And from focusing on positive body image. These are things the whole family can do. They're not just for your child!



Remember! Keep the focus on energy and feeling good. Avoid focusing on weight or controlled eating.

Adapted from the following resources:

Calgary Health Region-Nutrition and Active Living, "When Weight Gets Ahead of Height in Children", 2003.

Calgary Health Region-Nutrition and Active Living, "When Weight Gets Ahead of Height-Tips for Family and Friends", 2003.

The ABCs of Feeding Preschoolers, produced by the Sudbury & District Health Unit, adapted and distributed by the Ontario Nutrition Resource Centre and Best Start Resource Centre. www.beststart.org



More information

Books

- Raising Happy, Healthy Weight-wise Kids**,
Judy Toews and Nicole Parton, 2001
- Child of Mine: Feeding with Love and Good Sense**,
Ellyn Satter, 2000
- Your Child's Weight...Helping Without Harming**,
Ellyn Satter, 2005
- Secrets of Feeding a Healthy Family**,
Ellyn Satter, 1999
- Hip Hop Happy! Adventures in Physical Activity for 3 – 5 year olds**,
Mary Campbell, 2001
- 500 Five Minute Games – Quick and Easy Activities for 3 – 6 year olds**,
Jackie Silberg, 1995

Websites

Alberta Health and Wellness:
www.health.gov.ab.ca

Alberta Centre for Active Living:
www.centre4activeliving.ca

Anaphylaxis Canada: www.anaphylaxis.ca

Canadian Health Network:
www.canadian-health-network.ca

Canadian Paediatric Society: www.cps.ca

Canadian Parks and Recreation Association:
Everybody Gets to Play www.cpra.ca

Child and Family Canada –
Moving and Growing: Exercises and activities
www.cfc-efc.ca/menu/physact_en.htm

Dietitians of Canada: www.dietitians.ca

Food Allergy Network: www.foodallergy.org

Health Canada: www.hc-sc.gc.ca

Healthy U: www.healthyalberta.ca

Physical Activity and Active Living:
www.phac-aspc.gc.ca

Ready Set Go: www.readysetgo.org

Contacts

Contact your health unit, or public health centre, or Health Link Alberta to find out more about other nutrition-related services such as:

- Handouts on healthy eating; lunch and snack ideas; picky eaters; food budgeting; reading labels; and more.
- Contact information for nutrition-related support groups and agencies in your community.
- Nutrition advice from a registered nutritionist or dietitian.
- Be Fit for Life Centres: www.befitforlife.ca.

Regional health authority offices are listed in phone books or visit: www.health.gov.ab.ca

Health Link Alberta

Edmonton, call 408-LINK (5465)
Calgary, call 943-LINK (5465)
Outside the Edmonton and Calgary
local calling areas, call toll-free
1-866-408-LINK (5465)
www.healthlinkalberta.ca



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- *The ABCs of Feeding Preschoolers*, produced by the Sudbury & District Health Unit, adapted and distributed by the Ontario Nutrition Resource Centre and Best Start Resource Centre. www.beststart.org
- *Healthy Children Come in Different Shapes and Sizes*. Written by the Huron County Nutrition Committee, 1992. Adapted and distributed by Nutrition Promotion Program, Peterborough County-City Health Unit 705-743-1000.
- Calgary Health Region
The Feeding Relationships in Toddlers, Preschoolers and Children (09/03)
When Weight Gets Ahead of Height in Children, 2003
When Weight Gets Ahead of Height – Tips for Family and Friends, 2003
Creating the Circle of Healthy Child Care, September 2004
- *Healthy Start for Life*. ©2003 Dietitians of Canada.
www.dietitians.ca/healthystart
- *Healthy Eating is in Store for You™*, ©2003 Dietitians of Canada and Canadian Diabetes Association. www.healthyeatingisinstore.ca
- Registered dietitians, community nutritionists, public health nurses, pediatricians, public health inspectors, environmental health professionals, community support workers and consumers of Alberta.
- Provincial Community & Public Health Nutritionists: *Healthy Eating and Active Living for your 1 to 5 year old* Committee 2004/05.

