As children begin preschool and school it is important that they receive a variety of healthy meals. It is important that parents, child care professionals, and school nutrition personnel all work to ensure that children are offered a variety of healthy foods.

### Key Building Block

**Nutrients**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Why Children Need Them</th>
<th>Good Food Sources</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Calcium</strong></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Calcium is essential for strong bones and teeth. All children need dairy products as a regular part of their diets to get enough calcium for their rapid growth.</td>
<td>Milk, Low fat milk, Flavored milk, Buttermilk, Acidophilus milk, Cheese, Low fat cheese, Yogurt, Cottage Cheese</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Iron</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>Iron-deficiency anemia is the most common nutritional deficiency in the United States today. Low iron makes children feel tired and have trouble concentrating and learning.</td>
<td>Red meats, Enriched bread, grains, cereals, Dry beans and peas, Dark green vegetables</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Vitamin A

Studies have shown that children often do not get enough vitamin A-rich foods in their diets. A diet high in vitamin A can help prevent diseases later in life.

- Cantaloupe
- Peaches
- Broccoli
- Carrots
- Pumpkin
- Squash

Vitamin C

Children often do not eat enough foods high in vitamin C. Vitamin C helps fight infections and heal cuts.

- Citrus fruits
- Pineapple
- Broccoli
- Sweet potatoes
- Peppers
- Tomatoes

Start the day right. Eat breakfast.

Breakfast can provide a large part of the day’s nutrients. Skipping breakfast leads to poor nutrition that affects school performance. Breakfast programs at school can improve attendance and performance in the classroom. Good nutrition throughout the day helps children be ready to learn.

Encourage children to make healthy choices.

Parents and child care professionals can encourage children to make good food choices away from home through nutrition education and talking about good food choices.
Nutrition Needs Grab and Go Lesson
Nutrition for the Preschool and School-Age Child

Talk about food choices made away from home and in child care.
During an afternoon snack or the evening meal are great times to ask children what they ate during the day. Remind children that everyone should eat a variety of healthful foods, including several servings of fruits and vegetables each day.

Make a game of asking children how many fruits and vegetables they ate during the day. French fries and pizza sauce can’t count in this game. Ask them to name fruits and vegetables they would like to add to their plate on the next day.

Involve children in cooking activities at child care.
Visit your local public library and find children’s cookbooks. Look for cookbooks with lots of pictures and simple, step-by-step instructions.

Check the recipes to be sure that they contain nutritious ingredients and meet the Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP) Meal Pattern. Talk to the children about choosing healthful recipes.

Then, get ready to cook.

Before beginning a cooking activity, explain safety rules to children.

- Wash hands with soap and warm running water before and after the activity for 20 seconds.
- Be sure to have a hand washing poster near sink. Example: “Drown a Germ: Wash Your Hands
- Clean and sanitize all work surfaces before, during, and after the activity.
- Keep cold foods in the refrigerator until time to prepare them.
- Always wash fresh fruits and vegetables, even if they will be peeled or cooked.
• Throw away foods that fall on the floor.
• Don’t sneeze or cough near the food. Children who have colds should have other activities away from the food.
• Use only plastic knives with older children. Younger children should not use plastic knives or any sharp object.
• Avoid using electrical appliances in the presence of young children.