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The Lunch Box Series, A: Healthy Lunches for Preschool Children

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the Lunch box

HANDOUT A
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HEALTHY LUNCHES FOR PRESCHOOL CHILDREN

As parents, we help our children enjoy healthy lives every day. Packing school lunches with nutritious foods is one important way for us to contribute to our children's life-long health.

What is a healthy lunch?

A healthy lunch has the nutrients and energy children need to grow, learn and play. It usually provides $\frac{1}{4}$ to $\frac{1}{3}$ of the nutrients and calories children need each day.



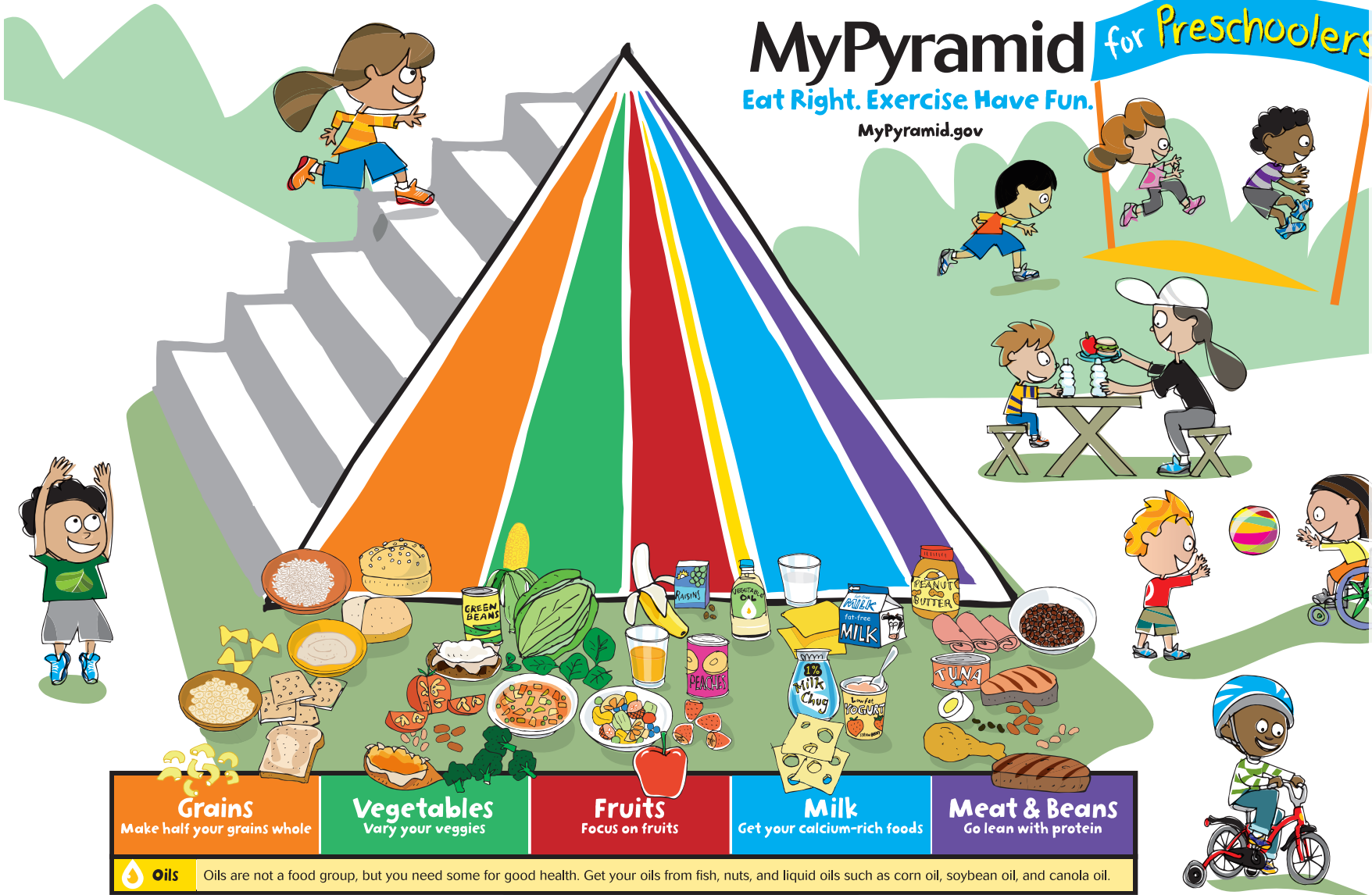
SHIRLEY PETERSON, Nutrition, Family, and Consumer Sciences Advisor, University of California Cooperative Extension, San Luis Obispo County.

The Lunch Box

MyPyramid for Preschoolers can help you choose the right types of foods in the right amounts for your child.

MyPyramid for Preschoolers

Eat Right. Exercise Have Fun.
MyPyramid.gov



Grains

Make half your grains whole

Vegetables

Vary your veggies

Fruits

Focus on fruits

Milk

Get your calcium-rich foods

Meat & Beans

Go lean with protein



Oils

Oils are not a food group, but you need some for good health. Get your oils from fish, nuts, and liquid oils such as corn oil, soybean oil, and canola oil.

Find your balance between food and fun



Fats and sugars — know your limits



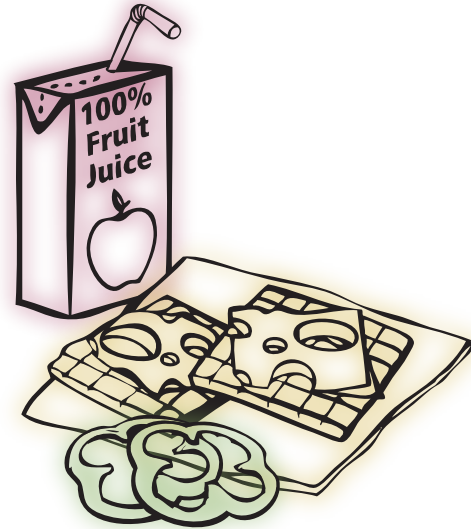
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WHY MyPyramid for Preschoolers?

Variety

Eating many different kinds of food is important for good nutrition. No one food or food group provides all of the nutrients we need for good health. *MyPyramid for Preschoolers* recommends that children eat foods from every color group of *MyPyramid* every day. The colors of *MyPyramid for Preschoolers* represent the five food groups plus oils. By making sure they eat foods from all five food groups each day, you can be sure you are providing a healthy diet for your children.



Amount

MyPyramid for Preschoolers is also a guide to how much food makes up a nutritious diet. It recommends small serving sizes that are appropriate for small children. Did you notice that some of the colored stripes in *MyPyramid for Preschoolers* are wider than others? The different sizes remind us to choose more foods from the food groups with the wider stripes.

Healthy Choices

The right foods in the right amounts provide a balanced diet. Select more foods from the bottom of *MyPyramid for Preschoolers* and fewer from the top. That will keep your child's diet higher in vitamins, minerals, and fiber and lower in fats and added sugars.

Flexibility

There are many choices in each food group, so you can choose foods that fit your family's preferences.

Extra Calories

The small white tip of *MyPyramid for Preschoolers* recognizes that there is room for a small amount of discretionary or extra calories in the diet. Kids earn these calories by being active and eating lower-fat and lower-calorie choices from each food group. The extra calories can come from the food groups or from small amounts of added fat or sugar. Foods like sodas, fruit drinks, candy, cookies, granola bars, and chips provide extra calories and should be used only now and then in a child's diet, and always in small amounts.

Physically Active

The person climbing the stairs reminds us that young children need to be active every day. Help your child find fun ways to be active for at least 60 minutes each day. Try dancing, walking, playing ball, swinging, or other activities your child enjoys.

Nutritious Lunch Ideas

Let *MyPyramid for Preschoolers* help you pack a healthy lunch. Include selections from four or five of the food groups when making your child's lunch.

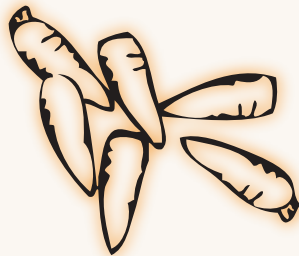
It's easier than you think!

These lunches include all five food groups:

- 1/2 turkey sandwich
(grains, meat & beans groups)
- Celery sticks *(vegetables group)*
- Raisins *(fruits group)*
- Low-fat milk *(milk group)*



- Peanut butter on graham crackers
(grains, meat & beans groups)
- Pineapple tidbits *(fruits group)*
- Baby carrots *(vegetables group)*
- Low-fat milk *(milk group)*

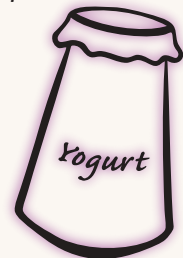


These lunches include four food groups:

- Ham strips *(meat & beans group)*
- Bread sticks *(grains group)*
- Orange wedges *(fruits group)*
- Broccoli florets *(vegetables group)*
- Water

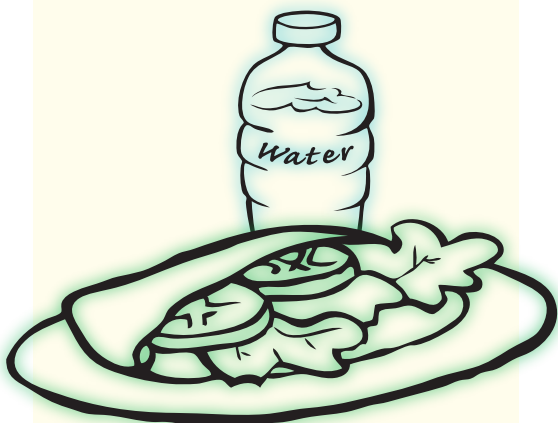


- Low-fat yogurt *(milk group)*
- Crackers *(grains group)*
- Red bell pepper strips *(vegetables group)*
- 100% orange juice *(fruits group)*



DID YOU KNOW?

- Most children establish their food likes and dislikes before they enter kindergarten.
- Learning to enjoy a variety of healthy foods during the pre-school years will help children have good health throughout their lives.
- Most parents worry when their child only wants to eat one or two foods. Don't be too concerned. This behavior usually lasts just a few days.
- When you offer your child healthy food choices every day, you don't need to be too worried about what he or she eats at just one meal or during just one day.



For best health:

Make half your grains whole.

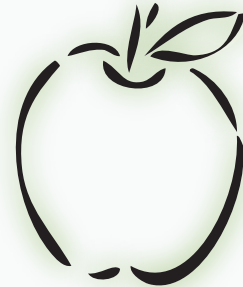
Focus on fruits.

Vary your veggies.

Get your calcium-rich foods.

Go lean with protein.

Find your balance between food and physical activity.



Tips from Parents:

"I pack a sandwich, a fruit, and a vegetable with milk or juice to drink."

—Mother

"Avoid the temptation to pack too many snack items."

—Mother

"Water is just fine for a drink."

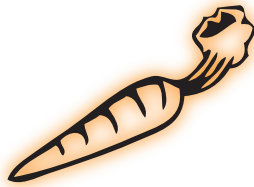
—Father

More Information

For more information on packing nutritious lunches for your child, log on to <http://www.mypyramid.gov>.

The Lunch Box is a series of handouts designed for parents who pack lunches for their preschool children. The goal of these handouts is to assist parents in packing lunches that are nutritious, safe, and appealing for preschool children.

The author acknowledges the cooperation of the San Luis Obispo County preschools that assisted in the development of the *Lunch Box* program. This program was made possible by funds received from the First 5 Commission of San Luis Obispo County.



You will find related information in these titles and in other publications, slide sets, CD-ROMs, and videos from UC ANR:

Let's Get Moving! (Kit), Publication 3494

If My Child Is Overweight, What Should I Do About It?, Publication 21455

Fit Families Novela Series, Publication 3496

To order these products, visit our online catalog at <http://anrcatalog.ucdavis.edu>. You can also place orders by mail, phone, or FAX, or request a printed catalog of publications, slide sets, CD-ROMs, and videos from

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