

# Healthy Beginnings



## When your child does not eat meat

Many children find meat challenging to eat. Some children do not like the taste. Others find meat too dry and hard to chew.

### Meat and meat alternatives are important

Meat and meat alternatives are a source of protein, iron and other nutrients. Protein helps build and repair body tissues and iron helps make healthy blood.

If your child is vegetarian or does not like to eat meat, offer meat alternatives such as eggs, peanut or nut butter, tofu, beans, lentils, nuts, seeds and soy-based meat substitutes. These foods have similar nutrients to meat and will help your child get the nutrition they need.

Adults sometimes think children are not eating enough meat and alternatives, but often they are. Children do not need a large amount of meat.

Canada's Food Guide recommends children aged two to eight years old have one Food Guide Serving of Meat and Alternatives each day.

### One Food Guide Serving is equal to:

- 75 g (½ cup) cooked fish, shellfish, chicken, turkey or lean meat
- 2 eggs
- 30 mL (2 tbsp) peanut or nut butters
- 150 gram (175 mL or ¾ cup) tofu
- 175 mL (¾ cup) cooked legumes (beans, peas, lentils, edamame)
- 60 mL (¼ cup) nuts and seeds

Since children's stomachs are small, it is best to divide one Food Guide Serving into several smaller servings throughout the day.

### Tips to make meat easier to chew

- Serve tender, juicy meats
- Cut meat into half to one centimetre (¼ inch) bite-sized pieces
- Simmer meats in broth for added flavour and moisture
- Chop, grind or purée meat, chicken or turkey, and add to soups, casseroles, chili and sauces
- Make mini meat patties with lean ground meat and serve in a mini bun
- Offer meat with a dip such as ketchup, mustard, plum sauce, ranch dressing or salsa

### Ideas for serving meat alternatives

#### Eggs

- Scrambled eggs. Serve with ketchup, or roll up scrambled eggs in a soft tortilla
- Fried egg sandwich. Place a fried egg and a slice of cheese in an English muffin
- French toast. Soak sliced bread in mixture of egg with a small amount of milk and cinnamon. Cook on stovetop until golden brown. Cut into pieces or long strips. Serve with applesauce or yogurt to dip
- Hard-boiled egg. Serve warm or cold
- Egg salad. Mix chopped hard-boiled egg and a small amount of mayonnaise. Spread on bread, bagel or pita



## Fish

- Fish melt. Mix a can of salmon or tuna with a small amount of mayonnaise and grated cheese. Spread on a bagel, English muffin or toast. Broil in the oven for one to two minutes
- Fish fingers. Dip pieces of white fish (e.g. sole, tilapia) in milk and then roll in breadcrumbs or crushed crackers (add seasonings for additional flavour). Bake in oven on a baking sheet at 450°F (230°C) for 10 to 12 minutes. Serve with ketchup or plum sauce
- Fish cakes. Mix together 1 can of salmon (drained), 175 mL (¾ cup) mashed potato and one egg yolk. Form mixture into 8 flat cakes. Sprinkle cakes with 15 mL (1 tablespoon) flour and then brush with one beaten egg white. Roll cakes in breadcrumbs and place on greased baking sheet. Bake at 375°F (190°C) for about 15 minutes or until golden brown. Serve with ketchup, aioli sauce or ranch dressing to dip

## Tofu

- Add crumbled firm tofu to soup, pasta sauce, stir fries, stews, casseroles, scrambled eggs or chili
- Tofu smoothie. In a blender, mix soft tofu with milk or fortified soy beverage and fruit. Blend until smooth to make a fruity shake
- Breaded tofu cubes. Combine 125 mL (½ cup) breadcrumbs and salt and pepper on a plate. In a bowl mix 30 mL (2 tablespoons) milk and one egg. Dip cubed pieces of firm tofu in milk mixture and then roll in bread crumbs. Place on greased baking sheet and bake at 400°F (205°C) for 20 to 30 minutes. Turn halfway through baking. Serve with ketchup, or teriyaki or plum sauce

## Legumes (e.g. kidney beans, chickpeas, lentils)

- Tomato legume sauce. Blend, purée or mash cooked or canned legumes. Add to tomato sauce. Use sauce on noodles, cooked vegetables or as a dip for bread
- Add kidney beans, black beans or lentils to homemade or store-bought chili, stew, soup, casseroles or pasta dishes
- Baked beans. Heat up a can of baked beans and serve with a slice of toast
- Edamame (young, green soybeans). Add shelled edamame to stir fries, soup, casseroles and salads. Or sprinkle parmesan cheese on boiled edamame. Depending on your child's age, they may enjoy squeezing the cooked beans from the pods into their mouth with their fingers.
- Hummus. Serve hummus as a dip for pita or vegetables or spread inside a sandwich

## Nut Butter (e.g. peanut butter, almond butter)

- Banana dog. Spread nut butter on a hot dog bun and top with a banana
- Ants on a log. Spread nut butter on celery sticks and top with raisins
- Banana bites. Spread nut butter on a tortilla and roll up a banana into the tortilla. Cut the roll into round slices

## Where to find more information

For more information and additional nutrition resources, visit [york.ca/feedingkids](http://york.ca/feedingkids)

To speak to a registered dietitian at no cost, call EatRight Ontario at 1-877-510-5102 or visit [ontario.ca/eatright](http://ontario.ca/eatright)

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