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Nutrition in the second and third years of life

Guidance for eating with the family

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Content

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Introduction

Dear parents,
Dear caregivers,

The first years of a child's life can affect their health for a lifetime. From the start of a pregnancy until the age of 4, crucial foundations are laid for the development of an individual's health.

This illustrated brochure shows the serving sizes for young children in the second and third years of life.

Page 4 shows an example of a day – from morning (sun symbol) until night-time (moon symbol). The thumbnail photos represent the relevant meals over the course of the day.

We would like to thank the Bavarian State Ministry of Food, Agriculture and Forestry for the photographs provided.

Together with its national partners, the Health Promotion Switzerland foundation has set up the Miapas project ([German](#), [French](#), [Italian](#)) to promote infant health. To this end, a standard set of basic principles and messages has been developed for professionals working with babies and young children. In addition, Miapas raises awareness among policymakers of the importance of health promotion in early childhood.

The Health Promotion Switzerland foundation is supported by the cantons and the insurance providers. It has a statutory mandate to initiate, coordinate and evaluate health promotion measures (Health Insurance Act, Art. 19). The foundation is accountable to the Confederation. It has offices in Bern and Lausanne, and its supreme decision-making body is the Foundation Council. Every person in Switzerland makes an annual contribution of CHF 4.80 to Health Promotion Switzerland; this money is collected by the health insurance providers. Further information: [German](#), [French](#), [Italian](#)

Example of a daily meal plan

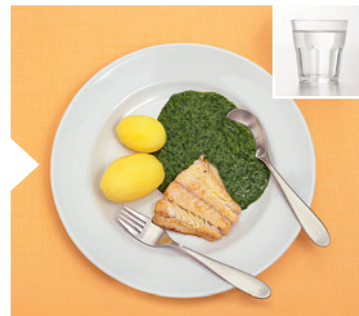
Muesli with oats, banana and milk



Cherry tomatoes + maybe bread



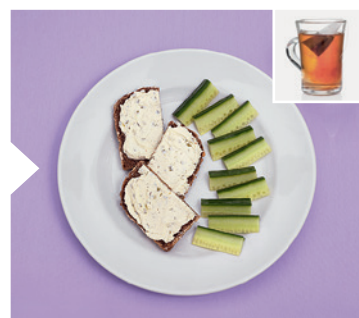
Fish, meat, egg or tofu, potatoes, spinach and rapeseed oil



Plain yoghurt with strawberries + maybe wholemeal crispbread



Wholemeal bread with cream cheese and cucumber



Drinks

Unlimited consumption: Tap water*, mineral water, unsweetened fruit or herbal tea



* Tap water in Switzerland is safe. It tastes good and is perfectly hygienic.

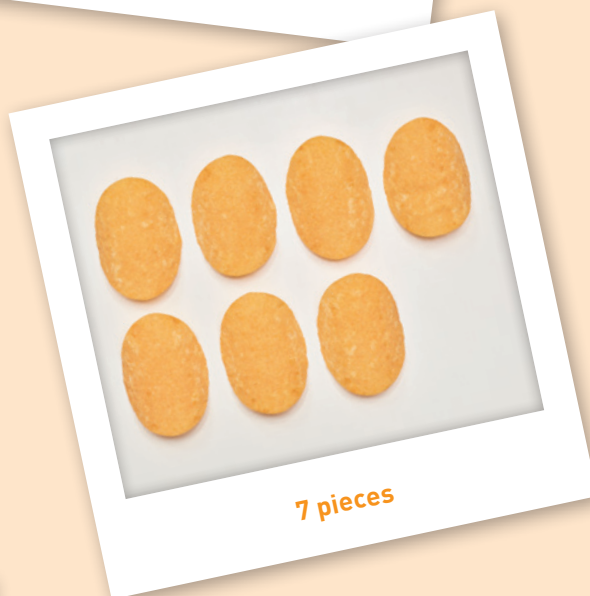
Limited consumption: Max. 1× per day 100ml juice (100% fruit, no added sugar) diluted with the same amount of water



Unsuitable for consumption: Syrup, lemonade, fruit juice drinks, instant children's tea and drinks containing caffeine (e.g. cola, iced tea)



Sweets and salty snacks



If sweets or salty snacks are offered, they should be limited to a maximum of one serving per day.

Each serving shown corresponds to around 95 Cal (calories).

Eating with the family

Regular mealtimes

Get your child used to a pattern of regular mealtimes and times when no food is offered. In many families, the usual pattern is three main meals (breakfast, lunch, dinner) and two small snacks in the morning and afternoon. Does this suit your family, too? If not, you and your child can find your own regular mealtime pattern that you can keep to. There should be no eating or snacking between meals.

Main meals

Main meals should always include:

- **vegetables or fruit** (depending on what is seasonally available, e.g. cucumber, carrot, cherry tomatoes, fennel, apple, grapes, apricots)
- **high-starch food** (e.g. bread, cereal, potatoes, pasta, rice, lentils, chickpeas)
- **high-protein food** (e.g. milk, yoghurt, quark, cream cheese, curd cheese, cottage cheese, cheese, meat, fish, egg, tofu)
- an **unsweetened drink** (e.g. water, fruit or herbal tea)
- a little rapeseed oil for cooking

A balanced meal should consist primarily of vegetables, fruit and high-starch foods. When it comes to high-protein foods, smaller quantities are required. Meat, fish, eggs or tofu should be provided only once a day. For dairy products, 3 servings a day are recommended.

Snacks

Mid-morning and afternoon snacks should always include:

- **fruit or vegetables** (e.g. apple, grapes, apricots, cucumber, carrot, cherry tomatoes, fennel)
- an **unsweetened drink** (e.g. water, fruit or herbal tea)



Tap water* or mineral water



Fruit/herbal tea without sugar

* Tap water in Switzerland is safe. It tastes good and is perfectly hygienic.

Depending on how hungry your child is, their mid-morning snack may be supplemented with a starchy food (e.g. bread, crispbread, corn waffle) and/or a dairy product (e.g. yoghurt, cheese).

How much fruit and vegetables do children need?

The recommendation is 5 servings per day, comprising 3 servings of vegetables and 2 servings of fruit. One serving equals the size of a child's hand. As your child gets older, their hands increase in size, so their servings of vegetables and fruit will "grow" with them.



Healthy and enjoyable

All parents want their child to eat a balanced and varied diet. But tricks, coercion or reasoning such as “It’s good for you!” are of little help and can even be counterproductive.

The following tips may be useful:

- Eat together as often as possible.
- Take your time at mealtime.
- Be aware of the fact that as a parent, you are a role model. Preferences, aversions and attitudes can strongly affect your child’s eating behaviour. Set an example for your child of what you expect from them.
- Encourage your child to try new foods. Even if your child doesn’t like a particular food, offer it again on a different day. Often a new type of food must be tried at least eight times before it tastes good.
- As parents, you decide what is being served. Make sure to offer a healthy variety.
- Your child should be allowed to decide what and how much of what is available they want to eat. Children have a good sense of hunger and satiety. Do not force your child to eat (up).
- Food has nothing to do with performance. Do not praise or scold your child for how much they eat. Rather, praise them for their attempts at eating independently.
- Do not engage in mealtime battles. If children realise that whining or refusing food will garner them a lot of attention or even an alternative meal, they will behave that way again at the next meal.
- Do not use food for comfort, reward or punishment.
- Make sure there is a pleasant atmosphere at mealtimes. Treat your child with appreciation and humour.
- Include your child when shopping, preparing food and setting the table. Children usually really enjoy that.

Additional information

- “Nutrition for babies and young children” brochure ([German](#), [French](#), [Italian](#)) published by the Federal Food Safety and Veterinary Office FSVO
- Federal Food Safety and Veterinary Office FSVO flyer “[Feeding infants](#)”
- FSVO link to nutrition for babies and young children ([German](#), [French](#), [Italian](#))
- Information leaflets published by the Swiss Society for Nutrition SGE ([German](#), [French](#), [Italian](#))
- [Tips for balanced mid-morning and afternoon snacks](#)
- Eating together, table culture: [PEP – Gemeinsam essen / Zehn wichtige Erkenntnisse](#) (German)
[Guide pratique. Alimentation et mouvement pour enfants de 0 à 4 ans](#) (French)
- Offerings for children and parents recommended by Health Promotion Switzerland ([German](#), [French](#), [Italian](#))

Personal information and advice

- Counselling for mothers and fathers ([German](#), [French](#), [Italian](#))
- Addresses of nutritionists ([German](#), [French](#))
- [Information about allergies and food intolerances](#)