

# BE ACTIVE KIDS®

For Parents and Families *Volume 12, Summer 2009*



Welcome to *Be Active Kids*, an innovative, interactive nutrition, physical activity, and food safety curriculum for children ages four and five. Find out more information at [www.beactivekids.org](http://www.beactivekids.org).

## Have You Heard?

Did you know that in 2008 the USDA released the new MyPyramid for Preschoolers? By utilizing this tool, designed specifically for children 2 through 5 years of age, you can help to ensure that your child is off to a healthy start!

**Growing up healthy.** There is a wide range of “normal” growth for preschoolers. On average, children between the age of 2 and 5 should be growing about 2 ½ inches every year and gaining 4-5 pounds every year. A preschooler’s growth over time is an important sign of good health and nutrition so monitor your child’s growth and visit a doctor regularly.

**Set a good example.** Preschoolers will likely follow your lead and pick up your table manners, likes and dislikes, your willingness to try new foods, and your physical activities. Allow your child to see you enjoying healthy foods like fruits and veggies, be willing to try new foods together, and never make yucky faces or negative comments about unfamiliar foods.

**Food Safety.** Preschoolers’ immune systems are still weak so it is important to follow recommended food safety guidelines. Always wash hands and food surfaces often, refrigerate promptly and always defrost frozen foods in the refrigerator, cook meats to proper temperature using a food thermometer, and don’t cross contaminate!



**Stay physically active!** Physical activity for preschoolers can be anything that gets them moving. It is important that children get the recommended 60 minutes of physical activity everyday so they can get into the habit at an early age, stay healthy, and have an outlet for all their natural energy!

**Picky eater?** If you don’t make a big deal, picky eating will usually end by school age. In the meantime, try making mealtime positive by letting your child help pick out fruits and veggies at the store, talking about happy things during mealtime, offering a variety of food choices, and letting your child decide how much to eat.

**MyPyramid Plan.** Get a customized MyPyramid Plan for your preschooler at [www.mypyramid.gov](http://www.mypyramid.gov). All you have to do is enter your child’s age, weight, gender, and physical activity levels and the plan will show you exactly how much your child should eat to meet his or her needs!

## Physical Activities for Be Active Kids

As children grow, their motor skills and coordination improve. Here are some general guidelines from MyPyramid.gov for when your child might be ready for certain physical activities:

- **Age 2:** At this age your child is ready to start running, galloping, jumping, and even swimming with adult supervision.
- **Age 3:** Let your child get out there and start hopping, climbing, catching, throwing, kicking a ball and riding a tricycle or bicycle with training wheels and a helmet. Try taking the whole family out to play catch or go for a family bike ride through the neighborhood!
- **Age 4:** Now your child can do activities that require a little more coordination like skipping, tag, sledding, swimming, or going through an obstacle course. Set up an obstacle course that will allow your child to practice different movements like running, skipping, hopping, etc.
- **Age 5:** At this age your child can try somersaulting, ice skating, rollerblading, gymnastics, t-ball or soccer. They can even ditch those training wheels and start learning how to ride a bicycle!

## Fun Food Safety

It is important to avoid serving certain foods which are more likely to cause foodborne illnesses to your preschooler. These foods include unpasteurized milk, unpasteurized juices, raw sprouts, unwashed fruits and vegetables, any foods containing raw or partially cooked eggs, and raw or undercooked meats, poultry, fish, and shellfish.



## Healthy Foods for Be Active Kids

Here are some healthy food ideas and tips for preschoolers from MyPyramid.gov:

- **Variety.** Change up a bit by adding different ingredients to a typical green salad like mango, tuna, or nuts. You could also let your child choose a vegetable to add to a soup, vary the types of cereals, breads, and sandwich fillings you buy, or add fruit to your preschooler's cereal.
- **Small portions.** Offer your child easy-to-eat portions so they won't be overwhelmed. Try using smaller bowls, plates and utensils and don't force your child to finish all the food on their plate.
- **Mealtime is family time!** This is important at an early age so it will become a lifelong habit. During this time make sure the television and cell phones are off and focus on your meal and enjoying the company of your family!
- **Kitchen activities.** Encourage your child to help in the kitchen. This will help them develop a positive attitude towards food and let them feel more "grown-up!" Let them set the table, crack or peel eggs, help assemble a pizza, mix ingredients, or scoop and mash potatoes.

