



VÄSTRA
GÖTALANDSREGIONEN

Food, activity and weight growth

Children 2-4 years



1. What is a normal food day for your child?

Try to create pleasure in eating and a pleasant atmosphere. All children benefit from set mealtimes with breakfast, lunch, evening meal and 2-3 snacks. For a large snack it is recommended that there should be fruit or vegetables and a sandwich and a glass of milk. A small snack may consist of one fruit or one vegetable. It may sometimes be difficult to start thinking about snacks and evening meals as soon as lunch has been cleared away, but there is much to be gained by planning. You avoid “nibbling” by planning the meals.

Children may sometimes not want certain foods; this usually passes. A child may eat well on some days and less well on others, which is quite normal. Continue to offer the child food even if the child does not want it. Serve the meals planned for the family, don't nag the child to “eat it up” or not to “take more than one helping” but let the child eat his or her food in a relaxed atmosphere.



2. What do you think of your child's eating habits?

The child does what you do. Do you set a good example?

Many children aged between 2-4 are doubtful about trying new foods. The child may need to try a new taste or a new food several times before he or she likes it. Many people think young children dislike certain foods such as anchovy, various spices and strong tastes, which is often not the case.

Allow sweets and sweet drinks no more than once a week.

If the child is tired or upset it is easy to use food, drink or sweets for comfort.

What other ways are there of comforting your child?

3. What vegetables and fruits does your child like?

The Swedish National Food Administration recommends that from the age of 4 upwards children ought to eat about 400 grams of fruit and vegetables a day. This amount represents about 2 fruits and 2 portions of vegetables per day.

Do you offer your child fruit and vegetables at every meal?



4. What do you know about keyhole-marked food?

Children are recommended to eat keyhole-marked food and to drink skimmed milk or water.

Keyhole-marked food may for example be skimmed milk, fibre-rich bread/pasta/rice and vegetables/fruit. The National Food Administration recommends that children, too, should eat smaller amounts of saturated fat and more unsaturated fat.

5. What do you think about your child's weight?

Parents' concerns about the child's weight should be taken seriously, whether the child is underweight or overweight. Sitting down together and eating as a family or with adults has a favourable effect on weight growth.

6. What does your child drink at mealtimes, between meals and when thirsty?

Skimmed milk and water are good drinks with meals. Water is the best thirst-quencher. The recommended intake of milk, fermented milk and yoghurt is 5 decilitres a day; that's all that is needed. This gives enough calcium. Squashes and fizzy drinks are not drinks for daily consumption and should be limited to 2-3 glasses per week.



7. What does your child like doing?

Children develop from unstructured play. It develops the child's imagination, communication, social interaction, motor skills and coordination.

The National Food Administration recommends at least 60 minutes' physical activity per day for children. Children are very active, they like walking, running and not sitting in a pram too much. The physical activities stimulate mental development.

Playing in the woods, climbing on boulders, carrying branches and jumping over obstacles is fun.

8. How much does your child watch TV or sit at a computer?

Many paediatricians recommend parents only to let their preschool children watch TV for a maximum of an hour a day, because otherwise they lose time for their own active play and motor development. Physical movement assists development of cognitive ability, in other words our thinking.

Eating in front of the television increases the risk of the child eating more than he or she needs, which increases the risk of obesity.

Does your child sit alone watching TV? A little child needs to have an adult beside her or him.



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