

# Nutrition for Early Learners



## Meal Requirements and Recommendations for Preschoolers

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# Child Nutrition Basics



# Child Development and Growth

- Growth slows after 1<sup>st</sup> birthday
  - Gain ~4-6 lbs/year
    - Compare to tripling birth weight during first year
  - Grow ~2-4 inches/year from age 2
- Unpredictable growth spurts
- Body proportions change
  - Longer & stronger limbs
- Body fat decreases through 4-6 years, then rebounds





# Overweight and Obesity

- 9.4% of 2-5 year-olds in the US are obese
  - Higher prevalence among Hispanic and Black children
  - Higher prevalence among lower-income children
- Few “grow into” weight without intervention
- Leads to serious health and development issues
- Focus on
  - A good attitude toward food and eating
  - Eating a variety of healthy foods
  - Limiting sugary drinks (including juice) and treats
  - Being active



# Caregiver and Child Responsibility

- The first step in healthy eating is knowing who is responsible for what
  - Caregiver Responsibility
    - Provide structure, support and opportunities
    - Choose the what, when and where of healthy eating
    - Make eating time pleasant
    - Do not let children graze between meals and snack times
    - Show children food and mealtime behavior
  - Child Responsibility
    - Choose whether or how much to eat from what is provided
    - Grow predictably
    - Learn to behave well at the table



# Cognitive Development and Eating

- Senses are important
  - Particular about smell, texture, appearance
  - More sensitive to bitter tastes
  - Preferences like no foods touching are common
  - Meal time is excellent opportunity to teach senses
- Begin to understand categories and labels
  - Color, shape, quantity
  - “Like” and “don’t like”
  - “Good” and “bad”
    - Avoid these labels!



Q&A



| Thank you!