Meal Requirements and Recommendations for Preschoolers

Nutrition for Early Learners
Child Nutrition Basics
Child Development and Growth

• Growth slows after 1\textsuperscript{st} birthday
  – Gain \(\sim\)4-6 lbs/year
    • Compare to tripling birth weight during first year
  – Grow \(\sim\)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
• 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!
Thank you!