

Children Under Two Need 5 A Day

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(NAPSA)—Babies and toddlers who routinely eat and enjoy a variety of fruits and vegetables start life with a real health advantage.



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There is overwhelming evidence that a lifelong pattern of eating a variety of fruits and vegetables every day may reduce the risk of heart disease, cancer and high blood pressure. It may also have an effect on many other major diseases and the maintenance of a healthy weight.

Starting early to build a child's preferences for a variety of fruits and vegetables is an important step in establishing healthy eating habits. When a baby is ready for solid foods, the 5 A Day principles can help set a goal for offering a variety of fruits and vegetables each day, even if it's just a taste. Check with a physician or registered dietitian for guidance on when to start solid food. The transition to table foods is the time to begin shaping eating patterns that will influence food choice for a lifetime. Often during the transition to table food, fruits and vegetables may be left behind in favor of easy-to-eat table foods.

It's important to emphasize that 5 A Day is a goal. Don't force a child who is not interested. Just keep trying. Make it fun. Make it colorful. Offer foods you may not like. Try not to bias your baby's fruit and vegetable preference based on your own. An older baby or toddler may like them. A new fruit or vegetable may need to be offered several times before a baby accepts it. Be careful not to misread a baby's cues. A face that a baby makes may be saying, "What is this? It's new to me" and not, "I don't like this."

Let a baby's appetite drive the amount he eats. Watch her cues and offer only as much as she wants. Never force your baby to finish a whole jar or your toddler to "clean the plate." One-half of a 4-ounce jar of baby food or a quar-



5 SERVINGS
— EQUAL —
2½ JARS

ter of a cup is an appropriate serving size for an older baby or toddler. Match how you serve fruit and vegetables—pureed, mashed or diced—with your baby's stage of development.

5-A-Day Tips

- Design a forest of cooked broccoli tops, try strained peaches or mashed avocados on toast, or cover fingertips with raspberries.
- Offer those first favorites like bananas or carrots while introducing new choices.
- Don't give up. Babies and toddlers often need to try a food many times before accepting it.
- Set a good example. Children more often mimic what they see than do what they are told.
- Rely on the convenience of baby food in a jar. It is safe, easy, nutritious and portable and comes in appropriate serving sizes.
- It's easy to reach the 5-A-Day goal for baby. Five servings is equal to 2½ jars.

Help your baby develop a lifetime of healthful eating habits by working toward offering five or more servings of fruits and vegetables a day. Include a wide variety of flavors, colors, shapes and textures, appropriate for their age, to make eating fruits and vegetables more enjoyable as well as nutritious.

For more information go to: www.gerber.com, www.5aday.com and www.aboutproduce.com.

Note to Editors: Forty-sixth in a series of monthly 5-A-Day columns. For previous stories featuring other fruits and vegetables go to www.napsnet.com and search: "Pivonka."