

# Building Blocks

issue 18

A NEWSLETTER PROMOTING CHILDREN'S HEALTH FROM THE ANNE ARUNDEL COUNTY DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH

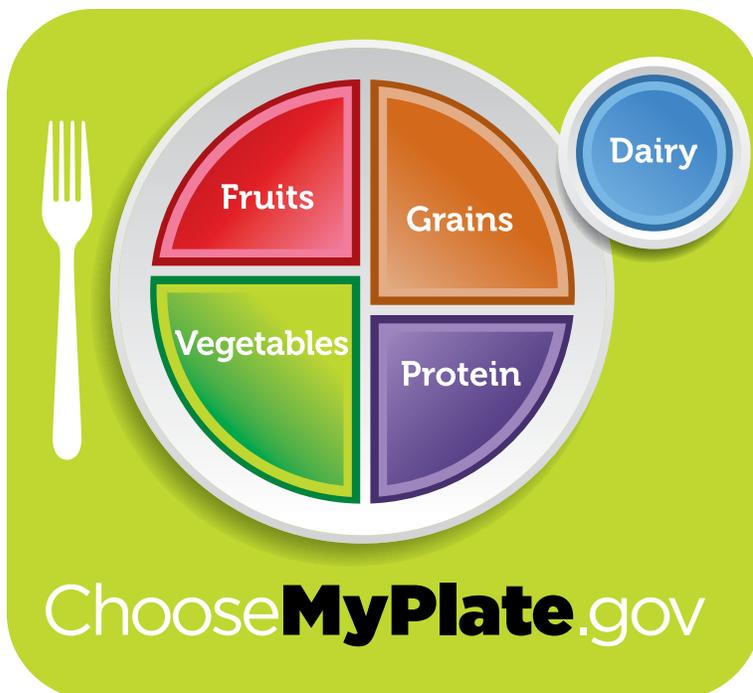
## Healthy Kids, Healthy Future

Children spend much of their day in your center. Create wellness guidelines to help motivate staff and parents to establish a healthy environment for kids to learn and play. Physical activity, screen time, food, beverages and infant breastfeeding are all components that make a center healthy.

You can learn more about best practices in these areas at [www.healthykidshealthyfuture.org](http://www.healthykidshealthyfuture.org). While you're there, take the "Let's Move! Child Care Checklist Quiz" to discover where your center excels and create an action plan for keeping the children you care for happy and healthy.

### Exploring Food Groups with MyPlate

The "MyPlate" infographic below provides a simple guide for making healthy meals and snacks for the children in your care. Use it to plan, prepare and serve food that will help children get the nutrients they need to grow up strong and healthy. Learn more at [www.ChooseMyPlate.gov](http://www.ChooseMyPlate.gov).



#### Focus on fruits and vary your veggies!

Make  $\frac{1}{2}$  of the plate a variety of colorful fruits and vegetables. Choose fruits and vegetables that are fresh, frozen or canned in water or 100% juice.

#### Go whole grain!

Make  $\frac{1}{4}$  of the plate grains. Serve whole grains, such as brown rice, oatmeal and whole-grain pasta, at least half of the time. Refined grains, like enriched pasta and white bread, are stripped of nutritious bran and fiber when processed. The whole-grain oatmeal in our hands-on "Apple Oat Balls" recipe (page 3) will keep kids full and energized!

#### Don't forget about dairy!

Children ages 1 to 2 should drink whole milk. For children over the age of 2, serve low-fat (1%) or fat-free (skim) milk products that are packed with calcium. Other dairy sources, such as sour cream, yogurt and cheese, should be low-fat or fat-free.

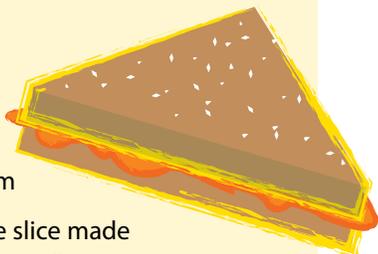
#### Pack a punch with lean protein!

Make  $\frac{1}{4}$  of the plate healthy protein. Choose low-fat protein sources most of the time, such as chicken (skin removed), lean ground beef, beans and unsalted nuts.

## Creating Healthy Meals Using MyPlate

MyPlate can help transform foods your kids already love into nutritious and balanced meals. For example, use MyPlate to turn a classic grilled ham and cheese sandwich and tomato soup into a nutrient-packed meal with:

- 100% whole-wheat bread
- A slice of lean, low-sodium ham
- Cheddar cheese slice made with low-fat (1%) milk
- Low-fat olive oil-based spread to use for pan
- Low-sodium tomato soup
- A small bunch of grapes



This meal incorporates all of the food groups, has little added fat, sugar or sodium—and it's delicious! To view sample meal plans and proper portion sizes, visit [www.ChooseMyPlate.gov/preschoolers.html](http://www.ChooseMyPlate.gov/preschoolers.html).

## Kids Can Help Prepare Meals and Snacks

Kids who help prepare meals and snacks are more likely to try new foods and eat the foods they make. Follow the simple tips below—so that everyone gets involved and has fun!

### BEFORE — Think ahead when planning a meal or snack.

- Gather all necessary equipment and ingredients.
- Clean any surface where you will prepare food.
- Be sure that all staff and children wash their hands.

### DURING — Remember, cooking with kids takes time and patience.

- Check the "I Can Do It" list (page 3) for age-appropriate jobs.
- Demonstrate tasks to children. Let them follow through.
- Don't worry about kids getting it perfect—they are learning!
- A little mess is OK. Get children involved in cleaning up and make it fun!

### AFTER — Be a good role model. Sit and eat with the children.

- Taste-test the food with your kids. Share your opinions.
- Let the parents know what their children made; give them an opportunity to ask questions.



## DON'T FORGET ABOUT DRINKS

Providing healthy drinks throughout the day is just as important as serving healthy food. Sugary drinks can add a lot to children's daily caloric intake without satisfying appetites. Soda, fruit-flavored drinks, sports drinks and energy drinks are high in sugar and caffeine, and low in the essential nutrients kids need.

**Surprising fact:** Children 2 to 19 are getting about  $\frac{1}{4}$  of their daily calories from soda (American Journal of Public Health)! Help make sure your kids aren't drinking their calories:

- Have water available throughout the day, especially during physical activities and when children are playing outdoors. Avoid flavored waters with added sugar that can add calories they don't need.

- Milk is perfect for meals and snacks. Preschoolers need about 2 – 2½ cups per day. Children ages 1 to 2 should drink whole milk. Children ages 2 to 5 should be gradually switched to low-fat (1%) or fat-free (skim) milk.
- Thinking of serving juice? Try serving whole fruit instead. Fresh fruit offers a variety of nutrients, and most fruits are at least 90% water. Children ages 1 to 6 should only have 4-6 ounces of 100% juice in an entire day. Watch out for fruit-flavored drinks with lots of added sugar and little to no fruit.

**TIP:** Try making ice cubes out of 100% juice and adding them to water for a cool beverage.

# The Preschooler's 'I Can Do It' List

Use this list to ensure that each child participates. Although this list is broken down by age, remember that the children will improve their cooking skills with practice!

## 2- and 3-year-olds can:

- Wipe the table
- Wash or scrub fruits and vegetables
- Set and clear the table
- Tear lettuce and salad greens
- Measure and mix
- Put things in the trash
- Peel bananas: If children pinch the bottom of the banana, the peel easily comes apart!

## 3- and 4-year-olds can:

- Pour and measure
- Knead and shape dough
- Beat with a whisk or fork
- Spread jams, peanut butter, hummus, etc.

## 5-year-olds can:

- Use a blender with close supervision
- Use a potato peeler
- Cut soft foods with a plastic knife
- Make a sandwich
- Wash the table surfaces
- Beat eggs
- Mash soft fruits and vegetables



## Apple Oat Balls Recipe

Makes about 30 1-inch balls

### Ingredients:

6 cups old-fashioned rolled oats

1 carrot, peeled and shredded,  
or ½ cup shredded carrots

½ cup pecans, toasted and chopped (optional)

2 tablespoons of sugar

2 tablespoons packed light or dark brown sugar

¼ teaspoon ground cinnamon

2 apples, peeled

Juice of 1 lemon  
(or 2 tablespoons lemon juice)

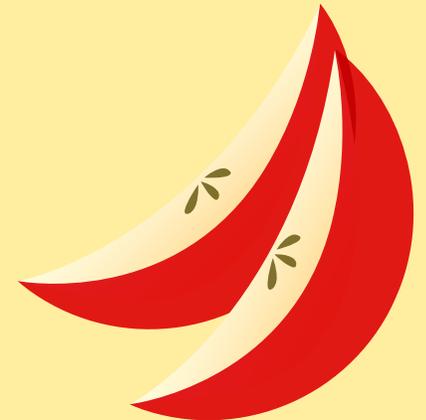
¾ cup water

½ to ¾ cup creamy peanut butter\*

3 tablespoons raisins

2 tablespoons dried cranberries

\*Peanut butter is added to the recipe to make the balls hold together tightly, but you can make the recipe with other types of nut butters, such as almond, cashew, soy, sunflower or none at all.



1. Clean all preparation surfaces and have both children and staff wash their hands.
2. In a large bowl have children measure and stir together the oats, carrot, pecans, sugar, brown sugar and cinnamon.
3. With supervision, children can use an apple slicer to cut the apples. Then children can chop the apples into pea-sized pieces using safe, smooth-edged plastic knives and place the pieces in a small bowl. Children can measure and pour the lemon juice and stir to coat the apples. Have a child add the apples to the oat mixture, and children can take turns stirring to combine the ingredients.
4. Have children measure and pour ¾ cup water and stir to wet the ingredients. Have a child measure and add ½ cup peanut butter, and children can take turns to stir to thoroughly combine.
5. Using damp hands, children can form the mixture into 1-inch balls. If the mixture isn't sticky enough to form balls, add more peanut butter. Have each child press two raisins and one dried cranberry into each ball to create a face. They are now ready to eat!
6. Have children set the table, and put one Apple Oat Ball on each plate. Store leftovers in an air-tight container in the refrigerator for no longer than two days.

Nutrition analysis with peanut butter: Per serving (1-inch Apple Oat Ball): 117 calories. Protein: 3.3 grams. Carbohydrates: 16.7 grams. Fiber: 2.3 grams. Fat: 4.6 grams. Without peanut butter: Per serving (1-inch Apple Oat Ball): 78 calories. Protein 2.2 grams. Carbohydrates: 15.4 grams. Fiber: 1.9 grams. Fat: 1.1 grams.

Recipe adapted from Michelle Obama's Healthy Lunchtime Challenge and Kids' State Dinner, published by Epicurious, 2012. For more healthy and easy recipes, visit [www.choosemyplate.gov](http://www.choosemyplate.gov) and enter "Healthy Lunchtime Challenge" in the search bar.

# Kids Love Parties

Why not throw an apple tasting party? Just follow these easy steps:

**STEP 1:** Check your children's health cards for food allergies. Then have children choose the apple varieties they would like to taste by name and color—ranging from sweet to tart and red to green.

Make a shopping list of 5 to 9 different apple varieties that children want to try. Remember, you only need to purchase enough for each child to have a sample. See how each apple variety looks, tastes and the best time to buy at [www.usapple.org](http://www.usapple.org).

**STEP 2:** Have children wash apples and, with adult supervision, give children an opportunity to cut apples using an apple slicer.

**STEP 3:** Tasting party tips:

- Make sure kids wash hands before preparing and tasting.
- Provide paper plates, paper towels and serving utensils.
- Provide small paper cups and a pitcher of water.
- Set up a table or area where children can taste samples.
- Be a role model by participating in the tasting yourself.

**TIP:** Buy apples that are in season from local vendors. They'll be less expensive and taste better too!

## Need More Help?

If you need more information about children's health and safety, here are some local resources:

### ANNE ARUNDEL COUNTY DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH

410-222-7095 • [www.aahealth.org](http://www.aahealth.org)

[www.facebook.com/aahealth](https://www.facebook.com/aahealth)

[www.twitter.com/aahealth](https://www.twitter.com/aahealth)

Behavioral Health ▶ 410-222-6785

Communicable Diseases ▶ 410-222-7256

Emergency Preparedness and Response ▶ 410-222-4115

Healthy Babies ▶ 410-222-7223 or [www.aahealthybabies.org](http://www.aahealthybabies.org)

Healthy Start and Home Visiting ▶ 410-222-7177

Immunizations ▶ 410-222-4896

Injury Prevention ▶ 410-222-4223

Lead Poisoning ▶ 410-222-7003

Learn To Live ▶ 410-222-7979 or [www.LearnToLiveHealthy.org](http://www.LearnToLiveHealthy.org)

Maryland Children's Health Program (MCHP) ▶ 410-222-4792

Smoking Cessation ▶ 410-222-7979 or [www.MyQuitKit.org](http://www.MyQuitKit.org)

Smoking Stinks website for kids ▶ [www.SmokingStinks.org](http://www.SmokingStinks.org)

Women, Infants and Children (WIC) Program ▶ 410-222-6797

### ANNE ARUNDEL COUNTY FIRE DEPARTMENT

Office of Fire Safety and Injury Prevention ▶ 410-222-8303

### ANNE ARUNDEL COUNTY POLICE

Community Relations ▶ 410-222-8562

### ANNAPOLIS CITY POLICE

Community Safety ▶ 410-268-9000

### MARYLAND POISON CENTER

1-800-222-1222 or [www.mdpoison.com](http://www.mdpoison.com)

### U.S. DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention ▶ [www.cdc.gov](http://www.cdc.gov)

Building Blocks is published by the Learn To Live program at the Anne Arundel County Department of Health, 1 Harry S. Truman Parkway, Annapolis, MD 21401, 410-222-7979, [www.LearnToLiveHealthy.org](http://www.LearnToLiveHealthy.org). The services and facilities of the Anne Arundel County Department of Health are available to all without regard to race, color, religion, political affiliation or opinion, national origin, age, sex, sexual orientation or disability.

# Learn To Live

Anne Arundel County Department of Health  
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