



# Wee Learn

Wee Builders  
(3-4 years):  
Dining Out With Kids &  
Healthy Eating Don't Have  
to Be Mutually Exclusive



Finding healthy eating options for kids while dining out or on the go can be a challenge. That's especially true for families with busy schedules who commonly have to grab a quick meal between games, piano lessons and other activities.

Kids LiveWell, offers these tips for parents looking for healthy eating options while dining out:

- Choose a restaurant that caters to children and has a healthy children's menu, which includes smaller portion sizes and meals designed to provide ample nourishment for smaller bodies.
- For kids' meals, opt for milk as a beverage and fruit for dessert.
- Order kids' foods with sauce on the side when possible.
- Substitute healthier sides in place of fries, such as carrots or apple slices.
- Choose two or three suitable menu items, then let your child pick one of them.
- Let kids order their familiar favorites when they eat out. For new foods, offer a bite or two from your order.
- To get more calcium, order low-fat or fat-free white or chocolate milk or add a slice of cheese to their sandwich. Choose dairy-based treats like yogurt, a milkshake or frozen dairy dessert.

Some other tips to ensure dining out goes smoothly with young children:

- Pack distractions: Just in case boredom or restlessness set in, pack a few toys, books, tools for coloring, or anything that will keep your kids quiet and won't make noise that will distract other diners. If you forget to bring supplies, play games like "I spy" that keep them engaged but not rowdy.
- Set expectations. Before you leave home, tell your kids what kind of behavior you want to see at the restaurant as a sign of respect to other diners. Even if your child is too young to understand, try to convey what you can or demonstrate what you expect.
- Order off the adult menu: Many restaurants have healthier choices on the main menu than they do on children's menus, order a ½ portion of a regular menu item - most restaurants will accommodate it.

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