

Balanced Plate: Ages 6-12

Build your rainbow every meal. A variety of colorful vegetables, quality protein, whole grain carbs, healthy fats, and daily fermented foods supports growth, focus, immunity, and a thriving gut.

50% colorful veggies & fruit — Half the plate — fiber + color variety

20% protein — Growth, muscle, and immune support

20% carbs — Whole grains + starchy vegetables

10% healthy fats — Brain focus + hormone development

Aim for all 5 colors every day — each provides different nutrients: Red (tomato, strawberry, beet), Orange (carrot, squash, mango), Yellow (corn, pineapple, pepper), Green (spinach, peas, broccoli), Blue/Purple (blueberry, cabbage, beet)

50% — VEGGIES, FRUIT & FIBER

Raw or cooked — rotate varieties. Broccoli, kale, cucumbers, mushrooms, carrots, green beans, spinach, cauliflower, bell peppers, zucchini.

Fruit: berries, apples, oranges, melon, kiwi — antioxidant rich, gut-friendly.

Daily fiber: 19–25g.

Prebiotic picks: garlic, onion, leeks, asparagus, green bananas.

20% — PROTEIN

Include protein at every meal and snack. Eggs, chicken, ground turkey, salmon, canned fish, lentils, black beans, chickpeas.

Dairy protein: full-fat Greek yogurt, cottage cheese, kefir — also serve as probiotic sources.

Rotate types across the week.

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20% — CARBS

Whole grains: oatmeal, whole grain pasta, brown rice, quinoa, barley.

Starchy veggies: sweet potato, corn, peas.

Minimize refined grains and added sugar.

10% — HEALTHY FATS

Avocado, olive oil, salmon, walnuts, chia seeds, flaxseed, eggs, full-fat dairy.

Omega-3s (salmon, sardines, walnuts, chia) support cognition, mood, and reduce inflammation.

Aim for 2–3 omega-3 servings per week.

GUT-BOOSTING FOODS

Include something from each category daily.

- **Fiber-rich** — Beans, lentils, whole grains, vegetables, fruit — diversity feeds microbiome diversity
- **Colorful plants** — Each color = different phytonutrients converted by gut bacteria into key compounds
- **Fermented foods** — Yogurt (live cultures), kefir, sauerkraut, kimchi (for adventurous kids), low-sugar kombucha

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DAIRY

Full-fat dairy is preferred: Greek yogurt and kefir count as both protein and fermented gut-supporting foods — two roles in one. Look for live cultures and minimal added sugar. Cottage cheese is high-protein and calcium-rich. For lactose-sensitive children, goat kefir or coconut yogurt with live cultures are gentler alternatives.

FUN FOODS

Balance, not perfection: Fun foods are a normal and welcome part of childhood — the goal is not eliminating treats but steering toward better options when you can. When kids see nourishing snacks as genuinely enjoyable, the habit sticks. Some of our favorites: air-popped popcorn (we love LesserEvil), whole grain crackers with nut butter or cottage cheese (Simple Mills is a great pick), homemade fruit popsicles, and oatmeal chocolate chip energy balls — easy to make together and kids love them.

FOODS TO LIMIT OR AVOID

- **Artificial colors & flavors** — Linked to hyperactivity, behavioral issues, and disruption of the gut microbiome
- **Added sugar** — Feeds harmful gut bacteria, disrupts blood sugar, displaces nutrient-dense foods
- **Refined & ultra-processed foods** — Low fiber and nutrient density — drive gut inflammation
- **Refined seed oils** — High omega-6 ratio promotes inflammation — choose olive oil or avocado oil
- **Artificial sweeteners** — Alter gut microbiome composition and may increase sugar cravings over time
- **Emulsifiers & preservatives** — Carrageenan, polysorbate 80 — compromise gut lining integrity