

# Kitchen Skills At Every Age



Children learn about food through their senses (sight, touch, smell, hearing, and tasting). Teaching kitchen skills not only helps them to learn about food but also teaches them an important life skill.

Since children develop cooking skills at different rates, be sure to introduce skills that match their abilities at each age and stage. Remember to have fun.

**Remember to wash everyone's hands with warm soap and water before starting.**

## 2 to 3 Year Olds

Children this age often insist on doing a task but their attention spans are short. Try simple tasks and supervise them for safety.

### Kitchen skills to encourage

- Dry lettuce in a salad spinner
- Break bread into pieces
- Dip foods (e.g. dip bread into egg batter)
- Pick fresh herb leaves off the stem
- Add ingredients to a bowl
- Stir to combine ingredients
- Help find ingredients
- Carry unbreakable items to the table
- Put things in the garbage after cooking
- Shake salad dressing in a closed container
- Put paper muffin cups in the muffin tin

## 4 to 6 Year Olds

This is an age where children vary in their motor skills, independence and the ability to focus. Cooking can help to develop these skills.

### Kitchen skills to encourage

- Kitchen skills from the previous age group
- Find the tools and equipment needed
- Assemble foods: make trail mix or yogurt sundae with toppings you have prepared
- Help measure, add and stir ingredients
- Help pour batter into baking dish
- Slice soft cooked vegetables, soft fruit, cheese or tofu with a plastic dull knife
- Crack and beat an egg
- Spread butter and/or spreads
- Wash and scrub vegetables and fruits
- Tear lettuce to make salad
- Peel some fruit (e.g. bananas)
- Mash soft fruit and vegetables
- Juice oranges, lemons and limes
- Press cookie cutters
- Arrange food on serving plate
- Set the table and clear the table
- Cook with a friend for a fun play date

**Think about safety at all times and supervise your child.**

## 7 to 8 Year Olds

Children at this age can follow simple steps for recipes, can share and take turns. Start to teach cooking vocabulary (e.g. mince, dice, chop, sift, beat, grill, broil).

### Kitchen skills to encourage

- Kitchen skills from the previous age groups
- Use simple kitchen equipment (e.g. grater, toaster, blender, can opener or garlic press) after you show them how to do so safely
- Fill and level measuring spoons and cups
- Read a simple recipe out loud and do most recipe steps, except placing items in or out of a hot oven, with adult supervision
- Use the microwave with your help
- Rinse grains and canned beans
- Scoop out baked potatoes or avocados
- Scoop batter into muffin cups
- Form cookies and patties
- Use a grater to shred cheese
- Use a pizza cutter
- Make a breakfast parfait: cereal, fruit, yogurt
- Make tortilla wraps
- Toss a salad with salad dressing
- Invent a fruit salad or smoothie recipe
- Read child-friendly cookbooks from the library
- Make a snacks list and post it on the fridge
- Write out the grocery list

## 9 to 11 Year Olds

Skills vary widely in this age group. While some children are not mature enough to work at the stove, most are coordinated and able to understand how to use appliances safely.

### Kitchen skills to encourage

- Kitchen skills from the previous age groups
- Prepare simple recipes
- Use a sharp knife with easy to cut foods (cooked meats, easy to grip vegetables and fruit, cheese, bread)
- Use a timer and thermometer
- Pound chicken or meat
- Slice bread
- Put away leftovers
- Make their own school lunch
- Trim and slice vegetables
- Make a fresh vegetable or fruit platter
- Knead dough and let it rise
- Use the stove, with supervision, to make basic recipes like boiled eggs, pasta, omelets, pancakes, soups or grilled cheese
- Use a food processor, blender and mixer
- Use a panini press or waffle maker
- Store food safely after grocery shopping

## 12 Years and Older

Children at this age can be more independent in the kitchen with coaching from parents/caregivers.

### Kitchen skills to encourage

- Kitchen skills from the previous age groups
- Follow a recipe without help
- Use an oven or stove
- Use a chef's knife or other larger knives with supervision
- Use a grater to shred cheese or carrots
- Plan a dinner menu
- Develop grocery shopping skills (selection, cost, label reading, essential ingredients)
- Suggest options for using meal leftovers

## For more information

Visit [www.smdhu.org/ChildHealthyEating](http://www.smdhu.org/ChildHealthyEating)

Contact **Health811**, 24 hours, 7 days/week to speak to a registered nurse or registered dietitian, at no cost. Call **811** or toll free **1-866-797-0000** or live chat at [ontario.ca/health811](http://ontario.ca/health811)



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Feb. 2025