



OCCUPATIONAL THERAPY AND PHYSICAL THERAPY TEAM

Genesis Centre, Edmonton Catholic Schools
10537 – 44 Street, Edmonton, AB T6A 1W1
Phone: (780) 638-6810 Fax: (780) 638-6844

Kitchen Helpers

Why is it important?

It is possible to include every child regardless of age or abilities in cooking tasks. Cooking is a tactile task that engages the senses and can be broken down into small jobs. Start by showing children the task and then let them do it on their own. Getting children involved in the kitchen helps to build up their hand and shoulder strength!

2-5 year olds

Kitchen tasks that this age group can complete still require a lot of supervision. Give your child extra space and smaller tools to fit their hands since their hand dexterity and motor skills are still developing. Have them:

- wash produce in the sink
- brush oil with a pastry brush
- stir
- mix ingredients you put in a Ziploc bag.

6- to 7-year-olds

Children have more developed hand strength and motor skills at this age so they can take on more adult tasks. They still benefit from reminders to watch their fingers during grating and peeling. Have them:

- Grate cheese
- Peel fruits & vegetables
- Grease pans
- Rinse grains and beans
- Pour liquids into small containers

8- to 9-year-olds

Judge whether your child is ready to move onto more complex tasks such as:

- Use a pizza cutter and can opener
- Putting away leftovers
- Scooping batter into muffin cups

More reasons to get kids in the kitchen

- Children are also often more willing to try foods that they have helped prepare
- The kitchen is a great place to work on counting for younger children and measuring and weighing for older children
- Cooking is a life skill that children will take into adulthood
- Experts now state that cooking at home is one of the best changes you can make to improve your health. Including your children in the kitchen will foster positive life-long healthy habits.



Recipe resources:

- Kidspot:
<https://www.kidspot.com.au/kitchen/>
- Super Healthy Kids:
<https://www.superhealthykids.com/>
- See more resources attached to this handout.



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Example Rules for Kitchen Helpers

- **Wash hands** before handling food, during preparation and after.
- **Wear an apron.** Cooking can be messy.
- **Keep your mouth away** from food during preparation.
- **Read the recipe** all the way through to make sure you know what to do.
- **Collect all the food and cooking tools** before you start.
- **Cooking tools and appliances can be dangerous.** Learn how to use them safely.
- **Clean up.** Wash your cooking tools and put everything away when finished.

Get the children to take ownership of the rules by adding their own to this list (be flexible). Make a poster with the rules on it so the children can read them at all times.

Source: *Kids in the Kitchen* manual

<https://professionals.wrha.mb.ca/old/extranet/nutrition/files/KidsintheKitchen.pdf>

