



Feeding Young Children

Eating well helps children to grow well and learn well. Adults set the rules for child feeding, but children have responsibilities, too.

Parents decide:

- **What** food is offered to the child
- **When** food is offered to the child
- **Where** the food is eaten

Children decide:

- **Whether** or not to eat
- **How** much to eat



Parents decide . . .



What

- Include a variety of healthy foods in your child's meals and snacks.
- Include at least one food that your child likes. Let him/her taste new foods when he/she is ready.

Set a good example by eating these foods yourself.



Where

- Find a place where your family can sit together for a meal – whether at a table or on a blanket or on the floor.



When

- Try to schedule meals and snacks at regular times every day. That makes it easier for your child to decide how much to eat.
- Offer sit-down snacks 2-3 hours before meals so that your child will be hungry at meal time.

Children decide:

Whether

- Let young children decide whether or not to eat. They may not be as hungry on some days.
- Excuse children from a meal rather than forcing them to eat everything on their plate. Offer them a healthy snack if they're hungry later.

How Much







- Young children don't need as much food as adults. Offer child-sized servings. Let them decide how much to eat.

Family Meals

Eating meals together can help to build healthy families:

- Meals are a chance to talk to each other and to make family traditions.
- Children often have healthier diets when they eat with their families.
- Young children learn social skills during family meals (such as table manners, how to speak with others, and how to share and take turns.)

Mealtime Tips

-  Make family mealtimes a priority.
Try to schedule at least one family meal each week. This could be breakfast, lunch or dinner.
-  Keep meals simple and easy.
Prepare a simple one-dish meal at home. If it's a busy day, buy prepared food at a supermarket (such as pre-cooked chicken, potato salad, pizza, salad in a bag).
-  Serve a variety of healthy foods.
Include grains, vegetables, fruits, milk products, and meat/meat alternates (such as dried beans, eggs, peanut butter).
-  Involve everyone in food preparation and clean-up.
The work will go faster if everyone helps. This is a good opportunity for more family time, too.
-  Focus on the meal and on each other.
Turn off the television. (Videotape shows that you just can't miss.) Turn on phone answering machines.
-  Make mealtimes pleasant.
Calm and quiet meals are more enjoyable and will help your child eat better.

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