

Building Blocks

For a Healthy Life

Make Mealtimes Good Times

Make mealtime one of the best parts of their day.

- Try to plan so that children do not eat alone. Turn off the TV and phone so that you can focus on the meal and each other.

Keep meal times pleasant.

- Calm and quiet meals are more enjoyable and help children eat better. Do not rush through meals. Use mealtime to talk with children about happy things: their day at school, weekend plans, favorite games, and so on.

Make it easy for children to feed themselves.

- Give them child-sized plates, forks, and spoons. Use plastic cups that won't break. Be sure children are seated safely, and at the right height.

Teach good manners, but don't be too strict.

- Use mealtime to teach social skills such as table manners, sharing, talking quietly, and taking turns. Be patient and set a good example.



Have meals ready when children come to the table.

- If they have to wait, they may amuse themselves by playing with food and utensils.

Praise often and focus on the positive.

- Mealtime is not the time to argue, fight, or scold. Children learn best through encouragement, praise, and practice – not through force or punishment.



Used with permission by



The Food Stamp Program can help you buy nutritious foods. To find out more, call Oregon SafeNet at 1-800-SAFENET (723-3638) or (503) 988-5858 in the Portland metro area. This material was funded in part by USDA's Food Stamp Program. In accordance with Federal law and U.S. Department of Agriculture policy, this institution is prohibited from discriminating on the basis of race, color, national origin, sex, age, religion, political beliefs or disability. © 2007 Oregon State University. Oregon State University Extension Service cooperating. Oregon State University Extension Service offers educational programs, activities, and materials without discrimination based on race, color, religion, sex, sexual orientation, national origin, age, marital status, disability, or disabled veteran or Vietnam-era veteran status. Oregon State University Extension Service is an Equal Opportunity Employer.