

Building Healthy Eating Habits

Tips for Parents

- A parent's role is to give healthy foods at regular times. Your child can decide how much of that food to eat.
- It is normal and okay for your child to be picky or skip meals on once in a while.
- Be flexible. Look at what your child eats over several days, not just one day or one meal.
- Have your child try what the rest of the family is eating.
- Be patient with new foods and keep offering them. It can take up to 10 to 15 tries for a child to accept a new food.



Meals and Snacks

- Offer 3 meals and 2 to 3 healthy snacks each day at regular times.
- Include vegetables, fruits, whole grains, lean meats and low-fat dairy every day.
 - Use the MyPlate graphic above as your guide.
- Sweets and higher-fat snack foods can be part of the diet, but should be eaten less often and in small portions.
- Snack ideas: fruit, string cheese, hard-boiled eggs, peanut butter on toast, yogurt, and unsweetened cereal. For children age 4 years and older, raw vegetables, dried fruit and nuts are also good choices.
- Offer only water between meals and snacks. This will help your child to be hungrier and eat better at mealtimes.
- Limit fruit juice to one 4-6 oz. glass per day. Avoid sweetened drinks like soda, Kool-Aid and Gatorade®.

Trying New Foods

- Too many choices can be confusing.
- Offer a new food with foods that you know your child likes.
- Offer the new food at the beginning of the meal when your child is hungry.

Other Ideas

- Let your child help with grocery shopping and cooking. Have your child by:
 - choosing a vegetable at the store.
 - putting a slice of meat or cheese on a sandwich.
 - peeling a banana.
 - mixing or stirring ingredients.
 - putting plates or cups on the table.
- Eat with your child.
 - Set a good example with your food choices.
 - Make mealtimes pleasant.
 - Mealtime can be a great time to talk with your child.
- Do not make food a reward or a punishment.
- Make sure your child is eating enough.
 - Child-size servings are much smaller than adult-size servings.
 - A child who is growing well is getting enough to eat.
 - If you are concerned about the amount or types of food your child is eating, talk to your primary care provider.

Other helpful teaching sheets

#1555 Healthy Food Shopping

#1470 Smart Snacking

ALERT: Call your child's doctor, nurse, or dietitian if you have any questions or concerns or if your child has special health care needs that were not covered by this information.

This teaching sheet is meant to help you care for your child. It does not take the place of medical care. Talk with your healthcare provider for diagnosis, treatment, and follow-up.