

TIPS FOR FEEDING YOUR CHILD

Parents tend to worry about their child's nutrition if they skip a meal or snack on a daily basis. Keep in mind that most children can take in plenty of nutrition over the course of a few days. Most children eat two good meals per day plus one or two snacks. Trust your child's hunger and fullness cues.

Remember, parents are in charge of what food is offered and the child is in charge of how much they eat.

Here are some TIPS FOR ENCOURAGING A POSITIVE EATING EXPERIENCE:

Listen to your child's cues

If your child isn't hungry, don't force a meal or snack. Bribing or forcing your child to eat or clean the plate at meal time leads to unhealthy eating habits. This may also cause a power struggle over food and associate mealtime with anxiety and frustration.



Meal Time Schedule

Serve meals and snacks at about the same time every day. Each meal should consist of 3-4 food groups and snacks should consist of 2 food groups. You can also offer a fruit/veggie/dairy smoothie or a nutritious on the go bar.

Food Exposures

Young children often touch or smell new foods, and might even put tiny bits in their mouths and then take them back out again. Repeated exposure to a new food before your child chooses a new food is common. Remember, it is not necessary to love everything we eat. Offer new foods alongside your child's preferred foods at least once a day. The goal is to make one meal for the family at dinner time and avoid being a short order cook. Short-order cooking promotes pickiness and preference for their preferred foods.

Transitioning off of Breast Milk/Formula

Avoid toddler formula as it is unnecessary nutritionally for your growing toddler. Instead, transition onto cow's whole milk or a milk substitute if needed based on allergies. If your child struggles to drink milk, focus on offering yogurt and/or cottage cheese twice daily along with cheese.

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TIPS FOR ENCOURAGING A POSITIVE EATING EXPERIENCE:

Include your child

Encourage your child to accompany you to the grocery store to help you select your produce and other healthy foods. Avoid purchasing non-nutritious snacks. At home, encourage your child to help with meal preparation and cooking. Allow them to stir ingredients and rinse produce.



Be a role model

If you yourself are eating a balanced meal, including a lot of color, texture, and variety, your child is more likely to model this behavior.

Minimize distractions

Turn off all electronics during meal time. This will help your child focus on eating and hopefully participate in family conversation.

References: Mayoclinic.org; www.cdc.org; www.eatright.org

