

Tuckatalk

Setting Healthy Habits



ACT
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Canberra Health
Services



Setting Healthy Habits

It is important to set healthy habits when your child is young so that they can grow up to eat well. The way you offer food to your child is just as important as what food you offer.

As a parent, or carer, your role is to decide

WHAT food is offered

WHEN food is offered

WHERE food is offered

It is your child's role to decide

WHETHER to eat food that is offered

HOW MUCH to eat

Tips to help your child eat well

No pressure

Set your child up to enjoy mealtimes and to feel good about eating. Avoid using pressure or rewards to encourage them to eat.

Let your child decide when they are full. Trust that your child knows how much to eat to meet their needs.

It is normal for the amount a child eats to vary from meal to meal and day to day.

If your child is growing well, is happy and energetic they are probably eating enough.

Offer a variety of foods

Offer a variety of foods from all food groups each day.

Try not to offer the same foods at the same time every day as your child may tire of these foods quickly.

Offer family foods that your child can manage, for example, allow finger foods for younger children.

Try a buffet style meal and allow your child to choose foods to put on their plate.

Offer new foods

Offer new foods with familiar foods that your child likes to eat to increase acceptance. It can take up to 10 tastes (or more!) before your child learns to like a new food.

Do not offer alternative foods if your child refuses the meal but ensure that each meal has at least one food your child likes to eat.

Limit Distractions

At mealtimes turn off screen activities such as TV, phones, computers, and remove other distractions, such as toys and books, so that your child can focus on their eating.

Set a schedule

Children have small stomachs and high energy needs so they need to eat regularly throughout the day.

Provide meals and snacks every 2-3 hours so that your child develops a healthy appetite. Offer only water to drink in between so that they are hungry and ready for food at mealtimes.

Example meal times:

7.30 am	Breakfast
10.00 am	Morning snack
12.30 pm	Lunch
3.30 pm	Afternoon snack
6.00 pm	Dinner
7.30 pm	Evening snack (optional)

Note: Adjust times according to your child

Sit down to eat

Create a space to sit down to eat meals and snacks. For example, set a table with placemats to show it is time for eating rather than other activities such as homework or play.

Sit and eat with your child as this can be a great time of sharing.

Set an Example

Children learn how to eat well by watching others. Sit and eat with your child and let them see that you enjoy a variety of foods and talk positively about all food.

Avoid labelling food as good or bad, healthy or unhealthy – all foods can be included as part of a balanced diet.

For more information on Ellyn Satter's 'Division of Responsibility in Feeding' go to:

<https://www.ellynsatterinstitute.org/>

Where can I find out more information?

- TALK to your Maternal and Child Health (MaCH) nurse or General Practitioner (GP)
- MAKE AN APPOINTMENT with a Canberra Health Services (CHS) Community Dietitian by phoning (02) 5124 9977
- Go to health.act.gov.au for more information

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