

Family Meal Time Tips

If your child is not hungry:

- Have her join you at the table anyway. Tell her how much you enjoy her company when you eat.
- Try serving smaller snacks between meals.
- Look at what your child drinks between meals. Too much juice or sugary beverages can make children less hungry at mealtime.

If your child is too hungry to wait for dinner:

- Offer a small snack of a healthy food that you would serve for dinner (like a glass of milk, piece of bread, or small pieces of raw vegetables).



If your child won't try new foods:

- Serve a new food along with other foods your child likes.
- Ask her to try the new food, but don't force it. Let her decide how much to try.
- If she doesn't like the new food, let her take it out of her mouth.
- Serve the food again at other meals. You may need to offer the new food many times before she will try it. After awhile, she'll give it a try. Children often need to taste new foods many times before they like them.

If your child is hungry, but doesn't want what you served for dinner:

- Always serve a few foods your child likes and will eat, like bread, milk, or fruit.



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ML-025116 2/04





Family Meal Time

Children enjoy sitting down and eating with their families.

Make Meal Time “Family Time”

Family meals are a time when everyone at home sits down and eats together. Family meals:

- Don't have to be fancy or formal.
- Don't have to be “just dinner.”
- Can be lunch, snack or even dessert.

*What's important is making time to **eat together.***

Family Meal Time Is a Time for Learning and Sharing

You learn from your children.

- “Tell me about what you learned in story circle today?”
- “Who did you play with at free play time today?”
- “What did you eat at snack time?”

They learn from you.

- “This is a vegetable. It's called broccoli.”
- “Milk helps keep our bones strong.”

Everyone has a chance to share.

- “Do you think we'll all get soaking wet during the rain storm tomorrow?”

Family Meal Time Involves Everyone

- Ask your child to set the table, pour milk, or do other simple tasks. This will help you save time, and you both spend time together.
- Make a list of foods your child likes for meals. Use the list to help you choose foods to serve during the week.
- Have your children help you choose a meal for the week. Or, ask them to choose a vegetable or fruit to serve at a meal. Talk about how we need many kinds of food to stay healthy.
- Have your child help you make a shopping list.

At Family Meal Time, Children Practice Eating Skills

- They may need help serving themselves.
- They might need someone to cut their food into smaller pieces.
- They may use their fingers to get food onto their fork or spoon.



Note: Children learn by watching how other people eat.

During Family Meal Time

- Turn off the TV and loud music.
- Be patient if there is a spill. Don't let accidents spoil your meal. Show your child how to clean up the spill.
- Praise good behavior. When children feel good about how they feed themselves, they will eat better.
- Teach by showing. For example, say, “Hold your cup with both hands, like this. It makes it easier for you to drink your milk.”
- Ask your child how much he wants to eat, or let him serve himself. This will lead to less wasted food and fewer hassles.

Parent and Child Activities

- Go around the table and have everyone share a story about their day.
- Start a funny story. For example, “Once upon a time there was a little girl who loved peas.” Have everyone add a few sentences to the story.

After Family Meal Time

- Let your children carry their dishes or glasses to the sink.
- As your children get older, let them help clear the table and put dishes into the dishwasher.
- Give everyone a job. This makes clean up quick and easy.