



WIC **Healthy Family** Newsletter
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Teaching Good Food Habits

Learning good food habits will help your child live a healthy, happy life. Here's how you can teach your child good food habits.

Give your child enough table time

Does your child play with his food and take a long time to eat meals? That's normal. Young children do not have the muscle development or skills to eat as fast as you do. They need lots of practice. Eat at a slower pace and enjoy your food and family. Rushing meals can upset you, your child, and others at the table.

Be a good role model

Your infant or child watches what you eat. If you eat and enjoy collard greens, mangoes, broccoli, or apples, chances are your child will try them — if not now, then later.

It's what you say *and* what you *do*. As children grow up others in their lives become role models. Remember, most children grow up wanting to do the things they see others *doing*.

Skip the urge to reward, punish, or soothe your child with food

Have you been tempted to say: "If you don't eat that last bite, I'll be mad!" "Clean your plate so you can play," "No dessert until you eat your vegetables," or "Stop crying, and I'll give you a cookie"? Remarks like these may lead your child to overeat later in life and can create struggles at the table.

Instead:

- Show love for your child for who he is, not for what he eats.

- Reward you child by spending time playing with her.
- Serve vegetables every day, and eat them yourself — your child will do the same.
- Listen to your child when she is upset; let her know you care about her feelings by talking with her.
- Let your child leave food on the plate; avoid making a child eat food he doesn't want, especially when he is full.

A happy mealtime table is:

Caring, calm, and respectful

- Turn off the TV.
- Focus meals on eating and pleasant family talks that include your child.
- Plan meals as a quiet time for eating so your infant stays relaxed at the table.

Comfortable and safe from injury

- Stay with your young child while he eats, and give him your full attention.
- Use a stable, comfortable high chair or child-sized chair. A counter stool without back support isn't safe.
- Get easy-to-hold, child-size utensils and cups.

Safe from choking

For children under age 4, skip hard, small, whole foods such as popcorn, nuts, seeds, and hard candy. Slice foods such as hotdogs, grapes, and raw carrots into small strips. Teach your child to chew foods well before swallowing them.

For children under age 2, avoid peanut butter. For older children, be careful with sticky foods such as peanut butter. Spread just a thin layer on bread.



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