

No More Food Fights

Establishing healthy eating habits has lifetime benefits. According to child nutrition expert Ellyn Satter, the key to a healthy feeding relationship is a division of responsibility between the parent (or other caregiver) and child.

Parent's Feeding Tasks

- Choose and prepare foods.
- Provide regular meals and snacks.
- Make eating times pleasant.
- Offer chances to learn new skills.

Children's Eating Capabilities

- Children know how much to eat.
 - Children will eat a variety of food.
 - Children will grow predictably.
 - Children's eating will mature.
-

Five easy ways to enjoy meals without squeals

1. Make regularly scheduled meals a family priority

Young children need the reassurance of structured meal and snack times. Eating on the run may seem OK for adults, but it doesn't work for most preschoolers. Whether you are eating at home or "on the road," take the time to sit down and eat with your child.

2. Avoid pressuring a preschool child to eat

Most adults have good intentions when they try to force children to eat "healthy" foods or to try new items. The problem with pressure is that it doesn't work - ever. Kids like foods LESS if they are forced to eat them - or if they are given bribes or rewards.

3. Have realistic expectations for mealtime behavior

Preschoolers like to do well and master new skills - like table manners. Adults need to lay out clear expectations for appropriate mealtime behavior. Kids need to know, ahead of time, that they will have to leave the table if they misbehave.

4. Model the habits you want children to develop

Young children do not automatically know how to eat like "big people." They will learn how to eat and how to behave at the table by watching you. You can show children how to enjoy a variety of foods - and how to be adventurous with new foods.

5. Share the joy of eating as a family

Eating well is one of life's greatest pleasures. When you're eating at home, turn off the TV, sit down at the table and enjoy some time together. When you're eating in the fast food lane, take time to eat at the restaurant - or make it a picnic in the park.



National Nutrition Month 2003

Adapted by the NC NET Program from Eat Right Montana materials