

Healthy Habits For the Family

Healthy eating habits are key to good nutrition. Eating behaviors are learned at a young age and it is important to establish healthy eating habits for your child early. The best way to do this is to practice healthy habits together and encourage healthy eating for the whole family.

Try these five simple steps to promote healthy eating habits for your family!

Step 1: Establish Regular Meal Times

Schedule 3 meals and 2-3 snacks each day. Serve meals at the table with limited distractions. Try to eat as a family as often as possible. Keep snacks to one serving and try to include a couple of food groups.

At meals, offer one serving of at least 3-4 food groups.

Regular meal times can help to:

- ✓ Prevent grazing which can lead to over and under eating
- ✓ Supply a steady source fuel for energy
- ✓ Promote mindful eating
- ✓ Provide time to model good eating behaviors



Step 2: Offer a Variety of Food

Serve up different foods from all five food groups. This will help your child become more familiar with a wide range of foods. Prepare vegetables in a variety of ways (raw, steamed, roasted and grilled) to improve acceptance.

You can do this by:

- ✓ Offering new foods as part of the regular meal.
- ✓ Offer new foods first when your child is hungriest, followed by a food you know your child will eat.
- ✓ Letting your child choose the new food the family will try.



Step 3: Avoid Empty Snacks and Beverages

Sugary snacks and drinks fill up your child with empty calories. Try to limit the availability of these in your home and teach your child how to eat these in small amounts. Try these healthy snacks and beverages!

Healthy Snacks

- ✓ Yogurt topped with berries
- ✓ String cheese and crackers
- ✓ Carrot sticks and dip
- ✓ Graham crackers and milk
- ✓ Low sugar cereal with raisins and nuts

Beverage Ideas

- ✓ Dilute 100% juice with water
- ✓ Flavor water with sliced orange, lemon or lime.
- ✓ If your child drinks flavored milk, try skim milk with only a small squirt of flavoring and color.



Step 4: Encourage Self-Regulation

According to Satter's Division of Feeding Responsibility, the parent is responsible for what is offered and how it is presented and the child is responsible for whether or not they eat it and how much they eat.

To encourage self-regulation:

- ✓ Provide structured meals and snacks to set your child up for success.
- ✓ Offer food at meal and snack times but allow your child to determine when they are hungry and full.
- ✓ Use kid-sized plates, bowls and cups

Step 5: Use Food for Nourishment Only

Using food as a reward or punishment may change your child's attitude toward certain foods and cause them to over-indulge or completely avoid certain foods.

Try these positive reinforcements:

- ✓ Praise your child when they try a new food, even if they don't like it.
- ✓ Focus on the positive, not on the negative.
- ✓ Promote good behavior with fun activities or family outings rather than treats.

