



Teaching Good Food Habits

Like brushing teeth and hand washing, learning good food habits is a skill that can help your child be healthy for life. Here's how to nurture lifelong good food habits.

Caring, calm, and respectful

- Focus mealtime on eating and family talk that includes your child.
- Turn off the TV during meals.
- Plan quiet time for eating so your child comes to the table relaxed.



Give your child enough table time.

- Does your child seem to dawdle at the table? That's normal. Young children don't have the ability to eat as fast as you.
- It takes about 20 minutes for the stomach to feel full, so eating slowly is a good thing.

Be a good role model. Your child watches what you eat.

- If you eat and enjoy collard greens, bok choy, asparagus, or plantains, chances are your child will try them too.
- It's not just what you say; it's also what you do.



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

- Have you ever said this???
“Clean your plate so you can play.”
“No dessert, until you eat your vegetables.”
“Stop crying, and I'll give you a cookie.”

Remarks like these may lead kids to eating problems and overeating

- A child might associate love with food and learn to eat to get rid of bad feelings.
- Rewarding a clean plate can get kids in the habit of ignoring body signals for hunger.
- Offering a dessert as a reward for eating another food (like veggies) can make the reward food all the more desirable.

Instead use a non-food approach.

- Reward your child with attention and kind words.
- Console with hugs and talk.
- Show love by spending time and having fun together.