

Parents Provide, Kids Decide

Parents and children have their own jobs to do when it comes to feeding. Parents decide what, when and where to eat. Children decide what to eat, how much to eat or whether to eat at all.

Parents Provide: What to Eat

- **Serve a variety of healthy foods:** Offer foods from all food groups throughout the day. These include fruits, vegetables, dairy, meats, and grains. Limit sweet or salty treats that can be high in calories, sugar or salt and have little nutritional value.
- **Offer new foods with old favorites:** If a new food is refused, offer it again another time. Children may need many exposures of a new food before they decide whether they like it.
- **Prepare the same foods for everyone in your family:** Plan one meal for everyone. Children will learn to eat a variety of foods even with a limited number of choices at mealtime. You can respect your child's food likes and dislikes and still not be a short-order cook.



Parents Provide: When to Eat

- **Serve regular meals and snacks:** Children need to eat 3 meals and 1-3 snacks per day depending on their age. They also do better with a routine. Try to have meals and snacks at the same time every day. Offer snacks at least 2 hours before a meal so your child will be hungry and ready for the next meal.
- **Offer water when your child is thirsty between meals:** Kids can consume a lot of calories from beverages like fruit juices, sports drinks and soda. They will eat better if you save milk for meals and snacks instead of letting them drink all day long.
- **Stick to a meal and snack routine:** Children should not eat between meals and snacks. This interferes with their appetite at mealtime. It is also not good for their teeth. If your child asks for something between snacks and meals, offer them water to drink.

Parents Provide, Kids Decide *continued...*

Parents Provide: Where to Eat

- **Decide where to eat meals and snacks:** Eat in the kitchen or dining room and seated around a table. This helps your child focus on what they are eating and reduces the risk of choking.
- **Limit distractions during meals:** Turn off the TV, video games or any other things that can take your child's attention away from eating. Put cell phones away. Kids can eat more when they aren't paying attention to what they are eating or drinking.
- **Create a pleasant eating environment:** Some parents want their children to eat well and pressure kids to eat foods. Cheerleading and bribes don't help. Forcing food down because it is good for you will teach your child not to like it. Be a good example and show your child that you enjoy a variety of foods without pressure.

Children Decide: How Much to Eat

- **Let your child choose from the healthy foods offered:** Your job is done when you select and prepare the food. Relax if your child eats only a few bites of the food served. If your child is growing well, and full of energy, you do not need to worry about how much they are eating at each meal.
- **Expect your child's appetite to vary from day to day:** Some days your child may eat a little and sometimes your child will eat everything you serve. Trust your child to eat. Continue offering a variety of healthy foods and your child will eat when they are hungry.

Dietician/Contact Name: _____

Phone Number: _____

