



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 how to eat or whether to eat at all.

Parents Provide: What to eat



Serve a variety of healthy foods. Offer soft table foods for young children to make chewing easier. Young children enjoy feeding themselves so expect them to eat with their hands and to make a mess! Set a good example by eating a variety of foods yourself.

Offer new foods with old favorites. If a new food is refused, don't make a fuss. Young children may need 8-10 exposures to a new food before they decide whether they like it. Try it again later.

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 "short-order" cook something else.

Parents Provide: When to eat



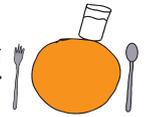
Serve regular meals and snacks. Young children need to eat often. They also eat better with a routine. Try to have meals and snacks at about the same time every day. Offer snacks at least 2 hours before a meal so your child will be hungry and ready for the next meal.

Offer water when your child is thirsty between meals. Young children can consume a lot of calories from beverages like fruit drinks, sports drinks, and soda pop. They will also eat better if you save milk and juice for meals and snacks instead of letting them drink all day long.

Stick to your meals and snack routine. Young children should not help themselves to food and drink from the cupboard or refrigerator. This interferes with their appetite at mealtimes. It's also not good for their teeth. When the meal or snack is over, store food out of reach and out of sight. It may take a few days, but your children will get used to the new routine and you will see their eating habits improve.

Prepare your child for mealtime. Give your child a five-minute warning to calm down, wash hands, and get ready to eat.

Parents Provide: Where to eat



Decide where to eat meals and snacks. Gather in the designated room (e.g., the kitchen, the dining room, etc.) and around a table. Expect your children to sit down to eat. This helps your child focus on eating.

Make mealtime a family time. Sit down and eat with your children. Turn off the TV and videos and enjoy conversations with your family. Mealtimes should be pleasant for everyone.



Children Decide: How much to eat

Let your child choose from the foods offered. Your job is done when you select and prepare the food. Relax if your child eats only a few of the foods served. Keep the big picture in mind. If your child is growing well and full of energy, don't worry about how much your child is eating.

Expect your child's appetite to vary from day to day. Some days your child may not eat at all. On other days, your child may eat only a bite or two of a few foods and sometimes your child will eat everything served. Trust your child to eat. Continue offering a variety of healthy foods, and your child will eat when hungry.

Iowa WIC Program
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