

# Healthy Happy Mealtimes

Help your children have a lifetime of good health by teaching them good eating habits from the start.

## TIPS FOR TEACHING TOTS TERRIFIC TRADITIONS

### 1. Make mealtime family time.

By cooking, eating and talking together you create memories that last a lifetime.

### 2. Schedule meals and snacks.

Serve breakfast, lunch and dinner plus snacks about the same time each day. You decide when and where to serve the food.

### 3. Be a good role model.

Buy, serve and eat the foods you want your children to eat. Your children learn from watching you.

### 4. Make one meal for the family.

Prepare one meal for everyone in the family. Focus on being together instead of making a separate dish for everyone.

### 5. Let your children listen to their tummies.

Allow kids to stop eating when they are full. Making kids finish all of the food on their plate promotes overeating.

### 6. Let children serve themselves.

Encourage taking small servings first. If kids are still hungry, they can help themselves to more food. Large portions may be overwhelming for a small child and can cause overeating.

### 7. Make mealtime's happy times.

Talk about fun and happy things! It's not a time to comment about a child's size, big or small or how much your child is eating.



## LOOK AT ME! WHAT YOUR CHILD CAN DO WITHOUT HELP:

- 1 Decide whether or not to eat.
- 2 Serve herself.
- 3 Choose which foods to eat from those provided.
- 4 Decide how much to eat.

**HAVE PATIENCE,  
NEW FOODS MAY TAKE  
TIME TO GET USED TO!**

**TIP: Kids are great helpers! They can pick out vegetables at the grocery store and help with simple tasks in the kitchen.**

# Your Top Mealtime Problems Solved



## **My family does not eat together. How can I make this happen?**

- Start by planning to eat at least one meal together. Dinner works for many families but maybe breakfast or lunch is best for your family-you decide.
- Many families find that they connect better with the television and cell phones turned off.
- Make it special—use a tablecloth and have your child help put the dishes on the table or spread out a blanket on the floor or outside and make it a picnic!

## **I give my child a treat like cake, cookies or candy when he eats his vegetables and finishes his dinner. I have heard I should not do that, is that true?**

WIC recommends that parents not use food, especially treats as rewards. Rewarding him with food may:

- Make him want that food more
- Make healthy foods seem bad and junk food seem good
- Cause too much weight gain. He may eat more food than he needs so that he can have the junk food

***Make vegetables fun. Be a role model, eat them too. Serve them often.***

## **I have a hard time saying no to my child when he wants junk food or a sugary drink. What are some ways to deal with this?**

- Let him know in advance what will happen if you are going to a store.
- Offer a toy such as a ball, bubbles, book, coloring book, or crayons instead of unhealthy foods or drinks.
- Let your child pick any fruit she wants at the store and make it sound like a privilege.
- Instead of a sugary drink, allow your child to choose a fun cup or straw to use for water.
- Let your child choose flavored water with no sugar added instead of soda, juice or a sports drink.
- Just say no! Yes, your child may cry the first few times, but once he learns that you won't give in he will stop.
- Do something fun with your child as a reward instead of buying junk food or sugary drinks; play a game or read a story.
- Let your child choose between two healthy options such as a banana or string cheese so she learns she has some control.
- Select one time per week for sugar beverages if you choose to offer them and remind your child when that is, if she asks. Stick with this no matter how much she cries or fusses.
- Whatever you decide to do, be consistent so your child knows what to expect!