

Fuss Free Mealtimes



Make mealtimes enjoyable

Choose to create positive food experiences at mealtimes.

- Eat meals as a family
- Talk calmly and positively
- Allow enough time to enjoy meals together
- Try eating in other places (like a backyard picnic)

Parent provides, child decides

When you do your job with mealtimes, your child will learn to do theirs.

- A parent's job is to provide the food and choose when and where a child will eat
- A child's job is to decide if they will eat and how much
- Avoid offering alternatives for uneaten meals
- Taking time to like foods is part of normal development



Trust their tummies

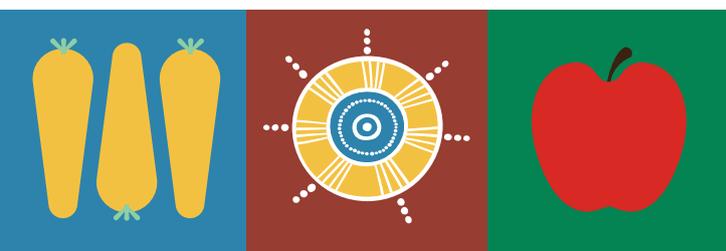
Let the decision to stop eating be theirs, children naturally stop when they are full.

- Resist pressuring your child to eat
- Avoid force feeding, coaxing or bribing
- Provide small serves and offer more if still hungry
- Allow your child to decide how much to eat
- If your child is full accept their decision to stop eating

Stick to a simple routine

Children love routine. Having a food routine helps children know what to expect.

- Offer food every 2-3 hours – that's three meals with small snacks in between
- Limit grazing on snacks so children are hungry at mealtimes
- Have a before meal routine with a pack up or 'get ready' warning and washing hands
- Have an after meal routine like clearing the table



HEALTHYEATING
ACTIVE LIVING

Repeat, repeat, repeat

It can take over 10 times for a child to accept a new food, so keep offering it.

- Offer new food with food your child likes
- Introduce one new food at a time
- Try separating foods so they are not touching
- Cook foods in different ways like raw, steamed or baked vegetables
- Make food fun like using cookie cutters to create shapes



Be a positive role model

Your family is your child's first teacher.

- Model eating and enjoying a variety of foods together
- Eat as a family serving the same food to everyone
- Don't be rude to food. Be respectful about food
- Don't yuck my yum, everyone has different tastes
- Try not to overreact in what you say or with body language



Avoid distraction

Parents and children can both be distracted at mealtimes.

- Switch off all screens including TV, iPad and phone
- Put toys away
- Use mealtimes as a chance to talk



Food isn't a good reward

Using food as a reward can change a child's relationship with food.

- Avoid food rewards like "if you don't eat your vegetables you won't get dessert" or "clean your room and you will get a chocolate"
- Try non-food based rewards like extra play time, stickers, praise or special activities, games or a visit to the park



Involve children

Children are more likely to try food they've explored in some way.

- Involve children in vegetable gardening, meal planning, shopping, cooking and food play
- Ask your child to help set the table, choose a placemat, plate or cup
- Encourage smelling, touching and tasting familiar and unfamiliar foods
- Let children feed themselves - mess is okay



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