

# Raising a Healthy Eater

Kids  
Can Do  
it!



## A Healthy Eater...

### Who, My Kid?

It's no surprise that parents need some help understanding what it means to eat healthy. From the Food Guide Pyramid to the latest food fad, it can be awfully confusing. The good news is that you don't need a degree in nutrition to raise a healthy eater. By following some basic guidelines, you can create an environment that encourages your child to eat well and maintain a healthy weight.

Almost all the snacks served to kids should be **fruits and vegetables**.

## Did You Know?

- Kids who drink more sugar-sweetened sodas, fruit drinks, sport drinks, and teas consume more calories and are more likely to be overweight than kids who drink fewer sugary drinks.
- Almost all the snacks served to kids should be fruits and vegetables. Most kids aren't eating enough!

## 12 Tips for Parents

### 1. Parents Control the Supply Lines

- Offer kids a variety of healthy foods and beverages at meal and snack times.
- Your job is to decide:
  - WHAT to offer to eat
  - WHERE to eat
  - WHEN to eat
- Though kids will pester their parents for less nutritious foods, adults should be in charge of deciding which foods are regularly stocked in the house. Kids won't go hungry. They'll eat what's available in the cupboard and fridge at home. If their favorite snack isn't all that nutritious, you can still buy it once in a while so they won't feel deprived.

### 2. Kids Get a Say So!

- Nutrition experts agree that from the foods you offer, let kids choose:
  - WHAT to eat
  - HOW MUCH to eat
  - WHETHER to eat at all
- This may seem like a lot of freedom, but if you follow tip #1, your kids will be choosing only from the foods and beverages you decide to serve.

### 3. Quit the "Clean Plate Club"

- Encourage kids to stop eating when they feel comfortably full.
- Many parents grew up with the "clean-your-plate" rule. This rule should no longer be used because it encourages kids to ignore their bodies' fullness cues and overeat.
- When kids notice and respond to feelings of fullness, they're less likely to overeat.

### 4. Be Persistent but Not Forceful

- Food preferences are developed early in life, so offer kids a variety of foods.
- Encourage kids to try a few bites of new foods, but don't force them to eat.
- Kids may need to be exposed to a food up to 15 times before they decide they like it.

### 5. Kids Do as You Do

- Be a role model and eat healthy yourself.
- When trying to teach good eating habits, try to set the best example possible.
- Choose nutritious snacks, eat at the table, don't skip meals, and eat together as a family at least once a day.

## Healthy Eating For Life!

If you want to help your child become a lifelong healthy eater, here is a way to assess how things stand right now.

Yes	No
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/> My child eats fruit every day.
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/> My child eats vegetables every day.
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/> My child eats a variety of foods, including dairy, whole grains, fruits, vegetables, and healthy sources of protein.
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/> My child typically eats only when hungry.
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/> My child does not use food to relieve stress or boredom.
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/> My child will try new foods.
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/> Our family rarely eats or snacks in front of the TV.
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/> Our family eats together at least 5 times a week.

If you answered 'no' to any of these questions, use these tips to help get your child on the right track.

## 12 Tips for Parents (cont'd)

### 6. Serve Small Portions

- Start kids out with small portions and then allow them to take seconds if they are still hungry.
- Use small plates and glasses to help control portions.

### 7. Food is Not Love

- Avoid using food to reward or punish kids.
- When foods are used to reward kids and show affection, kids may start using food to cope with stress or other emotions.
- Offer hugs, praise, play time or extra time with you instead of food treats.

### 8. Bring Back the Family Meal

- Eat meals together at home as often as possible.
- Meals together improve nutrition, weight control, and family communication.
- Set regular meal and snack times.
- Turn off the TV when eating!

### 9. Drink Calories Count

- Sodas and other sugar-sweetened drinks are loaded with sugar and calories.
- Water and milk are the best drinks for kids.
- Juice is fine when it's 100% fruit juice, but because it is high in calories, limit it to 1 cup a day or less.

### 10. Put Sweets in Their Place

- Occasional sweets are fine, but don't turn dessert into the main reason for eating dinner.
- When dessert is the prize for eating dinner, kids naturally place more value on the cupcake than the broccoli.
- Try to stay neutral about foods.

### 11. Rewrite the Kids' Menu

- Who says kids only want to eat hot dogs, pizza, burgers, and mac and cheese?
- When eating out, let kids try new foods - they might surprise you with their willingness to experiment.
- Let kids try a little of whatever you order or order an appetizer for them to try.

### 12. Limit TV and Computer Time

- The more kids sit in front of the TV, the more likely they are to (1) snack mindlessly and excessively, (2) eat the junk foods they see advertised, (3) be less physically active, and (4) gain excessive weight.

Source: [www.kidshealth.org](http://www.kidshealth.org)

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