



# Setting the stage for a healthy childhood

## Raising a healthy eater – 1 to 4 years

Feeding your child is one of your most important jobs as a parent. It is how we help our children grow healthy and strong. Creating good habits and routines sets a child up for a lifetime of healthy eating.



### Parent/Caregiver decides:

- what solid food to offer
- when to offer solid food
- where to offer solid food

### Child decides:

- how much to eat
- whether to eat

**Children can recognize brands and show brand preference from a very young age.** Limiting exposure to screen time can help lessen the strong influence advertising has on your child's food preferences and eating patterns.

## Parent/caregiver responsibilities

### You decide what food to offer

**Offer young kids the same healthy food the rest of the family is having.** Your child may not like all that's offered, and that's okay. Let them choose what to eat from the family meal.

Letting your child see and try many different flavours and textures will help them learn to eat a variety of foods.

**Milk and water are the best drink choices.** Juice, even if it 100% pure, has too much sugar. Sugar-sweetened beverages are not healthy for young children.

### You decide when to offer food

**Try to set regular times for meals and snacks.** A daily routine of regular meal times and snack times promotes good eating habits. It helps children learn there is always another chance for them to eat what they need.

Waiting between meals and snacks will help kids arrive at the table hungry and eat better. Serve your child three meals and 2 – 3 healthy snacks per day. Offer only water between scheduled meals and snacks.

### You decide where to offer food

Eat together. Talk together. Make mealtime a family time.

**Enjoy each other while enjoying family meals.** Keep meal time relaxed to nourish the body and help your family make stronger connections.

**Remove distractions.** Enjoy connecting with your family during mealtimes. Turn off the TV and keep smartphones and tablets away from the table so you can focus on your family.

## Child Responsibilities

### Let your child decide how much to eat

**Children's appetite can vary** – sometimes they won't eat much and other times they will want seconds.

**Listen to your child when they say they are full.** Young kids will eat the amount they need. They have a strong sense of hunger, appetite, and fullness, so they are likely to stop eating when they are full rather than when the food is gone.

**Lay out a variety of healthy foods and then let kids serve themselves.** Children learn and gain confidence when they are allowed to make choices about what to eat. And remember, a serving size for a young child is smaller than for an older child or adult.

### Let your child decide whether to eat

**Keep mealtimes positive.** Don't lecture or force your child to eat.

**Think beyond a single meal. Keep in mind what your child eats over time.** Meals and healthy snacks give children several chances every day to eat a variety of foods. If your child eats only a little or nothing at one meal, don't worry. They'll make up for it with other meals and snacks and get what they need for good health over time.

**Share this information with daycares and other caregivers.**

### For more info and ideas:

#### Healthy Families BC

<https://www.healthyfamiliesbc.ca/parenting>

#### Fraser Health Best Beginnings Website

<http://bestbeginnings.fraserhealth.ca>



[Live5210.ca](http://Live5210.ca)

*Give your child a healthy start by encouraging a healthy relationship with food, giving plenty of time for active play, and avoiding screen time and sugar sweetened drinks. Once children are 5 years old, a healthy goal is to Live 5-2-1-0 every day.*

**5 Enjoy-**  
FIVE or more vegetables & fruits every day

**2 Power down-**  
no more than TWO hours of screen time a day

**1 Play actively-**  
at least ONE hour each day

**0 Choose healthy-**  
ZERO sugar-sweetened drinks

supporting the  
**Live 5-2-1-0**  
campaign by **SCOPE**  
[www.scopebc.ca](http://www.scopebc.ca)