

Making and Enjoying Meals with Your Child



Cooking and eating together is the best way to teach kids healthy eating habits. Kids need meal routines, just like they need bedtime routines. So, make mealtime family time. Let your child help prepare meals. Eat sitting together at the table. And turn off the TV and talk as a family.

Family mealtimes

Family mealtimes should be about eating, not arguing over food. Here are some tips:

- **Serve your child small portions.** Your child can ask for more if they are still hungry.
- **Don't force your child to finish the meal.** Your child should stop eating when they feel full.
- **If your child chooses not to eat, don't force them.** But do turn off the TV and put away the toys. And make sure your child joins the family at the table. Let your child know that mealtimes are for sitting at the table, talking as a family, and enjoying the meal.

Your child can help!



Kids may be more likely to try new foods if they get to help make them. Even young kids can perform small tasks to help prepare meals and snacks. Here are some of the things that your child can do:

3-year-olds

Wrap potatoes in foil
Mix ingredients
Place things in trash
Wipe tables
Tear lettuce
Wash produce

4-year-olds

Same as 3-year-olds plus:
Peel oranges or hard-boiled eggs
Mash bananas using a fork
Set the table
Slice soft fruits or vegetables with a plastic knife

5-year-olds

Same as 3- and 4-year-olds plus:
Measure ingredients
Pour cool liquids
Use an egg beater
Snap green beans

To learn more

For more tips on family mealtimes, visit:

- [Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics at www.eatright.org/](http://www.eatright.org/)
- [MyPlate at myplate.gov/life-stages/families](http://myplate.gov/life-stages/families)

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