

# Dealing with Feeding Issues

You know what to feed your child, but your child does not want to eat healthy foods. So what does a parent do? Here are some tips to make sure your child gets proper nutrition.

## 1. Establish the division of responsibility.

Ellyn Satter, a registered dietitian and child psychotherapist, developed the division of responsibility for feeding: Parents are responsible for *what, when and where food is served*. Children are responsible for deciding for *how much (if any)* food is eaten. Therefore, as a parent it is your responsibility to serve nourishing foods in a positive environment, and your children are responsible for how much they eat. Even if they don't eat much at one meal, keep in mind that serving healthy snacks between meals will ensure that children get the nutrition they need.

## 2. Harbor Healthy Habits

To model good eating habits, you need to eat with your child on a regular basis. Today's best families may not always have the time to sit down together for every meal, however you should try to eat as many meals together as possible. Getting together for meals:

- allows you to act as a role model for good eating habits
- ensures that your child is eating nutritious foods
- allows you to find out your child's food likes and dislikes
- gives you the opportunity to introduce new foods to your child

You can continue to encourage healthy eating habits away from the table by:

- buying a variety of healthy foods, including fruits, vegetables, and whole-grain breads and cereals
- setting specific times for meals and snacks
- limiting sugary, high-fat snacks
- avoiding adding excess salt to foods
- encouraging your child to drink plenty of water or milk, not empty calorie fruit drinks or soda
- setting a good example

## 3. Dealing With A Picky Eater

Some children seem by nature to be picky eaters. With a little patience and some planning, you may be able to encourage even the pickiest eater to try at least a few bites of nutritious food at each meal. (Note: it may take up to 10 exposures before your child accepts a new food). Some things to keep in mind are:

- Try not to let food and eating become a focus of tension between you and your child.
- Do not cater to picky eaters by preparing "special" meals just for them (make sure your child does not go hungry, even if he/she snubs the main dish, by including something you know is liked, i.e., always serve bread or rolls).

- Try to find recipes that contain foods you know your child likes, and remember to include them in the shopping and preparation.
- Be imaginative (try shredding or chopping fruits and vegetables and adding them to pancakes or muffins).

If you find that nothing you do seems to work, there are registered dietitians who specialize in children's nutritional needs that can provide strategies for dealing with a picky eater.

#### **4. Meals Away From Home**

Sometimes it may seem as if your child is eating just as much outside of the home as they are inside the home. There may be snacks at school, birthday parties, sleepovers with friends, or sporting events that offer endless opportunities for your child to eat. The big challenge is making sure all of the good habits you have instilled in them will carry out into the world.

Here are some tips that may help:

- Teach your child the benefits of choosing low-fat, low sugar foods, rather than just telling them to do so.
- Offer advice on how to choose healthy foods.
- Encourage your child to choose a salad, vegetables, or a piece of fruit with every meal.
- Continue to offer your child interesting foods at home so that they will have more choices when they are out.

## ASSESSING YOUR CHILD'S EATING HABITS

How often does your child eat	Seldom or Never	1-2x per week	3-4x per week	Almost Daily
1. At least six servings of bread, cereals, rice, crackers, pasta, or other foods made from grains?	_____	_____	_____	_____
2. Foods made from whole grains?	_____	_____	_____	_____
3. Three different kinds of vegetables per day?	_____	_____	_____	_____
4. A dark green leafy vegetable such as spinach or broccoli?	_____	_____	_____	_____
5. Two kinds of fruit or fruit juice per day?	_____	_____	_____	_____
6. Two servings of milk per day?	_____	_____	_____	_____
7. Two servings of lean meat, poultry, fish, eggs, dry beans, or nuts per day?	_____	_____	_____	_____
8. Fatty or sugary foods?	_____	_____	_____	_____
9. Breakfast?	_____	_____	_____	_____

Compare your answers with the best answers listed here: **1.** Almost Daily **2.** Almost Daily **3.** Almost Daily **4.** 3-4x per week **5.** Almost Daily **6.** Almost Daily **7.** Almost Daily **8.** 1-2x per week **9.** Almost Daily