

# Did You Know?

## Feeding with LOVE and GOOD SENSE Raising Healthy and Happy Eaters

Every child is different. Each one grows according to genetics, age, and nutrition. Good nutrition and feeding helps children grow the way they are supposed to.

If you restrict food, it becomes very important to a young child. It makes him want it all the more.

### What Is Normal Eating?

- Kids eat inconsistently. Some days they eat more, some days they eat less.
- Kids like one food one day—and not the next.
- Kids often try new foods and spit them out.
- Children are interested in both *what* the adult eats and *does* at the table.
- Kids can be picky.

### What Can You Expect Every Child To Learn?

- To enjoy eating and feel good about eating.
- To be willing to try new foods and learn to like them.
- To eat when hungry and to stop when full.
- To eat the right amount to grow properly.
- To like being at the table with the family.
- To behave nicely at the table.

Children become  
healthy, happy eaters...

When parents do *their* job  
with FEEDING  
and children do *their* job  
with EATING.



## The KEYS in FEEDING CHILDREN Who Is Responsible For What?

PARENTS are responsible for *what, where, and when* the food is served.  
CHILDREN are responsible for *how much to eat and whether to eat or not.*

If you don't do  
your jobs, your child  
will eat poorly and not  
behave at the table.  
If you get bossy  
and try to do her jobs,  
she will fight back  
and not eat.

### It's the Parent's Responsibility...

#### • WHAT food is served

It's a parent's job to purchase and prepare the food. They influence the nutritional quality of their child's food intake. It's the parent's job to offer a variety of healthy foods that will promote their child's growth. It is also the parent's job to offer children the *same foods as the rest of the family*--not just foods they know their child will eat. Be child-friendly with feeding but don't cater to a child's pickiness. It is not a parent's job to be a short order cook! Offer the same meal for everyone. A meal should consist of low fat milk and protein food, vegetables, fruit, carbohydrate, and fat of some sort (butter/salad dressing/etc.). Don't hold back on food, otherwise children will get scared and eat too much. Instead, feed your child in the healthiest way. Then trust him to eat what he needs. Give your child freedom and support: "You can find something to eat here. You don't have to eat if you don't want to."

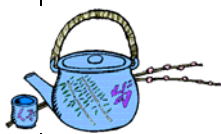
• **WHEN food is served**

Children do best with structured meals and snacks. Establish a daily eating routine, so that as much as possible, children eat at the same time every day and/or at the same time as the rest of the family. Be aware and limit caloric beverages (even juice) between meals. Don't let your child "graze" for food and beverages between times. Keep consistent meal and snack times. It's best if you don't wait for your child to ask for food. You are developing a routine to last a lifetime.

• **WHERE food is served**

Make meal time the family time. Make eating times pleasant. Don't leave your child alone. Talk with him. Encourage him to be part of the conversation. Turn off the TV. Limit distractions. Have your family rules include no eating while walking, running, or playing. Teach your child to turn down food politely, saying "yes, please" and "no, thank you." Don't chase your child with a spoonful of food. Don't argue, coax, or bargain with your child about eating.

Problems arise when parents get involved in the child's responsibilities.... and when parents let the child take over their responsibilities.



**Be a Good Role Model**

TRUST is the secret.  
Trust the inner wisdom of the body.

Each of us instinctively knows how much to eat. Our internal signals of hunger, appetite, and satisfaction can guide us if we listen. We can teach our children to listen to that guidance by emphasizing positive, orderly, tuned-in eating. We come to the table hungry, eat what we enjoy, and continue until we are ready to quit. We stop, knowing that another meal or snack is coming later, and we can eat again. If we eat until we have *genuinely* had enough (that is, until our mouth says "enough," not just our stomach), then eating will take its place as only one of life's greatest pleasures. Some days, we might eat a lot (because it feels good/or by simply by accident). But tomorrow, we won't be as hungry. We might eat a lot of one food, because it tastes really good or because we don't have it very often. Another time, we'll eat less. We don't have to count calories to keep the balance—our body will do it for us.

Give your child a joyful, trusting model of eating. Let your child teach you, in return, what normal eating is like. Children trust what goes on inside of them. This is the lesson we want to teach our children. They pay attention to their sensations of hunger and appetite. They automatically tune to their sensations to know when they have had enough to eat.

Children eat as much as they are hungry for on any given day. Some days they are hungry, some days they are not.

The same holds true for you. The amount you will need to eat will vary from one day to the next.

Trust the inner wisdom of the body.

- Ellen Satter,

*Secrets of Feeding a Healthy Family*

**It's the Child's Responsibility...**

• **How MUCH to eat**

Children are born knowing how much to eat. Children will eat a lot some days and very little other days. Children should not be forced to clean their plate or be forced to eat if they are no longer hungry.

• **WHETHER to eat or not**

It's your child's job to pick and choose from what you have put on the table. Don't force your child to eat a food he or she hates. Do expect that she will learn to like that food someday. If you take care of *your* responsibilities, you can trust your child to eat (or not).

**Here's What to Put on the Table**

Meals teach your child how to eat. Choose foods you like. Put 4-5 foods on the table. Let your child (and yourself) choose what to eat from what is on the table.

Children's Serving Sizes	Age 1-3	Age 3-5
Meat/Poultry/Fish	1-2 Tbs.	1 oz.
Eggs	1/4	1/2
Cooked dried beans	1-2 Tbs.	3-5 Tbs.
Pasta/Rice/Potatoes	1-2 Tbs.	3-5 Tbs.
Bread	1/4 slice	1/2 slice
Vegetables	1-3 Tbs.	3-5 Tbs.
Fruit	1-2 Tbs./or 1/4 piece	3-5 Tbs./or 1/3 piece
Milk	1/4-1/3 cup	1/3-1/2 cup

You give the food. Your child eats or doesn't eat. Don't make her eat some of everything on the table. She is more likely to eat only 1-2 tablespoons of only 2-3 foods. She may just drink milk and eat bread. That is all right. Don't make a fuss. At another meal, she will eat more or different food. Children don't eat much at any one time, but small amounts add up.

**Sources:**

- *Five Keys of Raising Happy/Healthy Eaters For Parents & Caregivers*, Norma Molina, RD and Doris Fredericks, RD
- *Secrets of Feeding a Healthy Family*, Ellyn Satter, RD, 1999.

