



**Tips to foster
good eating habits and
happy mealtimes!**



Here are some tips for fostering good eating habits in your kids and keeping mealtimes happy!

- Schedule regular meals and snacks — kids need an eating schedule to make sure they get enough energy and nutrients.
- Include one of your child's favorite foods at each meal.
- When you introduce new foods, do so one at a time. Be prepared to try new foods with your child more than once.
- Include your child in meal planning, shopping for food and in preparing meals. Kids like to eat what they've chosen and helped prepare.
- Offer meals and snacks in a relaxed environment — meal times should be a time when family and friends are happy and enjoying each other's company.
- Don't rush your child through meals.
- Don't force your child to clean up his or her plate. This can encourage a pattern of overeating.
- Start with small portions and allow extra helpings if your child is still hungry.
- Look for some fun children's cookbooks at the library and let your child choose a recipe to fix.
- Avoid using food as a reward. This can lead to habits that are hard to overcome later in life.
- Be a good role model and make good choices too!
- Keep a good supply of washed and cut up vegetables on hand. Children will eat these up with a tasty bean or yogurt-based dip.

Super Snack Ideas

Choose one of these carbohydrates and pair it with a glass of 100% pure juice, a piece of fruit, or a low-fat cheese stick:



- Bagels
- Pretzels
- Whole grain breads and rolls
- Low-fat, whole grain crackers
- English muffins
- Whole wheat pita pocket



- Pop frozen waffles or pancakes in the toaster and top with warm applesauce and cinnamon.
- Make homemade frozen pure juice popsicles in an ice cube tray or with popsicle forms.
- Air-popped popcorn is always a kid-pleaser. Try topping with Parmesan cheese.
- Pop an English muffin in the toaster and spread with spaghetti sauce, sprinkle with cheese and broil till melted. Kids love these quick mini-pizzas.
- Freeze grapes, bananas, cherries, peaches and blend with yogurt for a fruit smoothie.
- Fresh fruit kabobs are tasty served with a fruity yogurt dip.
- Mix favorite cereals, pretzels, and nuts for a healthy snack mix.
- Mix dried fruits together such as cherries, apricots, apples, and raisins.
- Blend your own juice punch by mixing fruit juices together.

Bread Spreads

...are fun and tasty – try mixing and matching!

- Peanut butter
- Apple butter
- Reduced fat cream cheese
 - Applesauce
- Smooth cottage cheese
- Jam, jelly, and preserves

Note: small pieces of food such as grapes, popcorn and nuts can be a choking hazard. Avoid nuts if your child is allergic to them.



Healthy kids keep moving!

Just like adults, kids need to get exercise and plenty of it. Here are some ideas to help get your child moving.

- Children should have an hour or more of physical activity every day.
- Outside activity is great, weather permitting. In warmer weather, be sure to use sunscreen and have them drink plenty of cool fluids.
- Involve your child in sports-related activities at school.

more! 

- **Get moving with your child.** How about bike rides together, a practice session of shooting baskets, or a walk around the neighborhood with the family dog?
- **Look for community-based activities** such as ice skating, swimming, soccer, dancing, gymnastics, and then get involved.
- **Consider participating in a group walk or run event for charity.**
- **Expose your child to a variety of activities** until he or she finds one that is appealing.
- **Turn off the TV and video games each day** and spend that time being physically active.

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Sack lunch magic

Brown bag lunches don't have to be just soggy sandwiches, cookies and a bag of chips. Here are some ideas that are sure to please your children.



- **Try chopped vegetables and small chunks of turkey and low-fat cheese in a pita pocket.** Toss with a small amount of salad dressing.
- **Try a new bread every day** — maybe a multi-grain variety with a low-fat cheese stick, apples and pretzels.
- **Try a peanut butter sandwich made with raisin bread.** Add an orange or carrots.
- **How about a thermos of hot soup with crackers and a fruit cup?**
- **Plan to make extra for dinner to use as leftovers.** Send along in a thermos or insulated lunch sack. Your child would love to have your homemade spaghetti with garlic bread and salad for lunch at school.
- **Unless your child cannot drink milk, every lunch (breakfast and dinner too) should be served with low-fat milk.**
- **Freeze juice boxes overnight** so they'll be chilled when ready to drink at snack time.
- **Use a blue ice container to keep perishables in the lunch cool and fresh.**
- **Add a package of animal crackers, vanilla wafers, or graham crackers for an alternative to cookies.**

*Michigan Department
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