

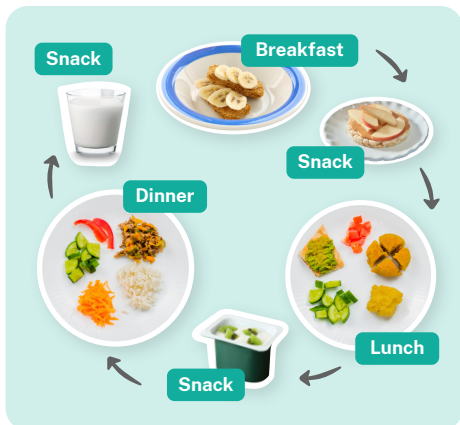
# Enjoyable Mealtimes

Raising children to enjoy a variety of foods



## Be a positive role model

- Children learn by watching and copying others. If you eat a variety of foods, your child is more likely to do the same
- Eat together when you can and try new foods as a family
- Serve the same food to the whole family. You can use less spice or salt, and cut food to a safe size to avoid choking
- Talk about food with children in a positive way
  - For example, ‘the carrots are orange and crunchy tonight’



## Follow a mealtime routine

- As parent or carer, decide what foods to offer and choose when and where your child will eat
- For children over one year old, offer food every 2 to 3 hours
  - For example, 3 meals a day and a small snack between meals
- Limit snacks and drinks (except water) between meals so children come to mealtimes hungry



## Allow your child to decide how much food to eat

- Children feel hungry or full when they are allowed to decide how much to eat
- After you serve a meal, allow your child to decide what foods and how much to eat
- It is common for a child to reject new food. Try to stay calm and not react, you can try again another day
  - It might help to say ‘that’s okay, you don’t have to eat it today’
- You do not need to offer other foods when meals are not eaten. They will have a chance to eat again at the next meal



## Food is not a good reward

- Avoid using pressure or bribes to get your child to eat
  - For example, avoid saying ‘one more bite’ or ‘if you eat your meal you can go outside and play’
- Avoid using food as a reward
  - For example, avoid saying ‘eat your vegetables and you will get dessert’ or ‘if you behave you can have an ice-cream’. This can make children prefer the reward foods even more



Adult



Child

## Serve child-size portions of food

- Give small amounts of food to start and offer more if they are still hungry
- A big plate of food can overwhelm children
- Try letting your child serve their own food from the middle of the table



## Keep offering a variety of foods

- It can take 10 or more times for a child to accept a new food. Only offer a small amount of the new food as this is less overwhelming
- Offer a new food with a food they already like to eat. This can help your child accept the new food. You can separate foods so they are not touching
- Cook or prepare foods in different ways
  - For example, steam, bake or grate carrots



## Involve children

- Involve children in cooking, gardening, menu planning, and food shopping. This can make them more interested in trying new foods
- Let children feed themselves — mess is okay
- Let your child to see, touch and smell food, without any pressure to eat



## Encourage a positive mealtime experience

- If a child does not want to eat, encourage them to stay at the table for family time
- Mealtime can range from 5 to 30 minutes
- If mealtimes feel stressful, you could try something new
  - For example, a picnic, or homemade place mats
- Turn off the television and put away devices during mealtimes

Family mealtimes can be challenging for many parents and carers.

Be patient and keep trying.