

Healthy Eating For Preschoolers



Why can eating healthy be hard for children?

- 🍏 Children like sweet tastes and need to learn to like bitter foods like vegetables by seeing and tasting them again and again.
- 🍏 Some children need to try a food more than 10 times before they start to like it.

Children learn by watching; let them help get dinner ready and eat together as a family.

What is Head Start doing to help children eat healthy?

- 🍏 Meal and snack menus are reviewed by trained dietitians and nutritionists.
- 🍏 Meals and snacks that are high in nutrients and low in fat, sugar, and salt are given every day.
- 🍏 Clean water is available to drink throughout the day.
- 🍏 Children learn about healthy foods and good nutrition as part of the Head Start curriculum.



What can you do at home to help your child eat healthy?

- ✓ Introduce small portions of new foods to your child. If they don't like the food, you can eat it and it will not go to waste.
- ✓ Offer new foods, or foods your child likes less, at the start of a meal when your child is most hungry.
- ✓ Prepare meals and eat at home as much as possible, instead of eating restaurant or takeout food.
- ✓ Children learn by watching! Make sure your child sees you eating healthy foods.
- ✓ Check portion sizes. Children should eat much smaller portions of food than adults.

Things Parents Shouldn't Do:

- ✗ Force children to "clean their plate." This can teach children to overeat when they are full.
- ✗ Use unhealthy foods as a reward or bribe.







Foods to Avoid with your Preschooler

- ✗ Sugary drinks like soda, juice, fruit drinks, iced tea, energy drinks, and sports drinks.
- ✗ Caffeinated drinks like coffee and tea.
- ✗ Sugary, salty, fried, and fast food.



Tips for Healthy Mealtime at Home

-  Have meals with the whole family, where everyone sits down at the table together.
-  Make mealtime a time for learning and social interaction for children; have conversations with your child about their day and their feelings.
-  Eat at a relaxed pace - give children enough time to eat their food without feeling rushed.
-  Go screen-free at meal time! Avoid using smartphones or other devices at the table.

Places to get healthy foods for your family meals!



Farmers' Market



Grocery Store



**Home and
Community Garden**



Food Pantry

Click here to find a list of places in your neighborhood to purchase fresh foods on our website!

Kid's Healthy Eating Plate



Why is it important for children to eat healthy?

- 🍏 Helps children grow and develop.
- 🍏 Helps children to be ready to learn at school.
- 🍏 Lowers the risk of diabetes, unhealthy weight gain, and heart disease.
- 🍏 Helps children learn healthy habits that will continue into adulthood.

Fill half your plate with colorful fruits and vegetables, from green broccoli to red strawberries!

Contact Us

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Recommended Books

Check out these children's books related to nutrition to read to your child!

[I Will Never Not Ever Eat a Tomato](#)

by Lauren Child

[Eat Your Peas](#) by Kes Gray

[Feast for 10](#) by Cathryn Falwell

[Lola Plants a Garden](#) by Anna McQuinn

[Before We Eat](#) by Pat Brisson

[Pete's A Pizza](#) by William Stieg



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References:

1. Birch, L. 1998. Development of food acceptance patterns in the first years of life. *Proceedings of the Nutrition Society* 57: 617-24.
2. Massachusetts Child Care Licensing Laws:
<http://www.publichealthlawcenter.org/sites/default/files/Final%20Massachusetts%20Summary%20Chart.pdf>