

A CLOSER LOOK AT EATING HABITS

Eating habits are formed during the early childhood years and may last a lifetime. Good eating habits do not just happen they must be learned.



Presenting children with a variety of nutritious foods—and limiting their access to low-nutrient foods can help them learn to make nutritionally sound food choices.

You can support positive eating habits by successfully introducing new foods, encouraging favorable attitudes toward food, and encouraging good eating habits.

Introducing New Foods

Introduce only one new food at a time. Offer a very small amount (one or two bites) of the new food at first, so the children can learn new flavors and textures.

Offer new foods at the beginning of the meal when children are hungry. Allow children plenty of time to look at and examine the new food.

Offer new foods to children when they are healthy and have a good attitude. Praise the children when they try the new food. If they don't want the new food today that's OK, just remove it and try it on another day.

Enlist the help of an eager child. Children will often be more willing to try a food if another person has already tried it and liked it.

Encouraging Favorable Attitudes and Good Eating Habits

Serve age appropriate portions, dishing out child size not adult size portions.

Set a good example, eating with the children and enjoying the foods served to them. This is an excellent time to allow children to share their conversations.

Provide a short transition time between activities and mealtime. Tell children a few minutes ahead of time that it will soon be time to eat. This helps them slow down and get ready.