

Top Ten Tips for Enjoying Mealtimes with your Child

Mealtimes provide an opportunity to spend time together, talk and share our favourite meals as a family. They are a social time but allow children to explore different foods and talk about what they like best. Also, providing time for children to see the foods other family members enjoy. Mealtimes can also enable children to develop other skills such as coordination.



- 1 **How does your child like their food presented** – would they like a sandwich or the same ingredients separated on a plate? Could they serve it themselves?
- 2 **Can your child help to prepare meals?** Washing their hands before and talking about germs together.
- 3 **Can you offer your child a choice of two meals which they can help you prepare?** You may show them the food packaging to make sure they understand the choices offered.
- 4 **Let your child add vegetables to their own plate** – how many broccoli trees or spoonful of peas? Consider having a vegetable of the week.
- 5 **Look at different foods by touching and smelling them.** Asking how they could be eaten (plain, in a sauce, with pasta)? What utensils would they like to eat with? (hands, spoon, fork, chopsticks)
- 6 **Sit down to eat** – if you can sit down together for a meal this will help with talking about sharing and what you are all eating. Could this be done without the distractions of phones and tablets. What mealtime would work best for you?
- 7 **Let your child have opportunities where they can be independent and feed themselves** – it may be messy to begin with, but young children are developing their coordination skills.
- 8 **As a family you could try to include foods from different cultures?** Talk about different tastes and smells and how foods are eaten in different cultures.
- 9 **Can you find any reduced food items in your local shop** – how can we use or freeze them? This is an opportunity to try something new – maybe something you wouldn't typically buy.
- 10 **Talk about how and where food is grown.** Self-pick farms are good for getting your own fruit and vegetables. Could your child name the different foods they choose?

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