

Nourishing Preschoolers



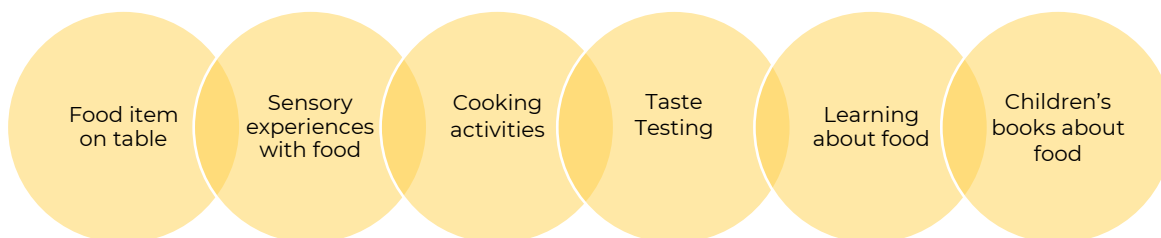
Objectives:

1. Discuss the developmental stages of becoming a healthy eater and common challenges
2. Identify the role of ECE professionals in nurturing healthy eaters
3. Recognize family engagement opportunities around nutrition and food
4. Identify one or more nutrition best practices to incorporate in your daily routines with children

How do we support children to become healthy eaters?

Learning to accept new foods

Young children may need 8-15 exposures or more to each acceptance and enjoyment of a new food



Overcoming challenges

Challenges

Neophobia
Picky eaters
Food jags
Sensory Processing Challenges



Strategies

Provide a varied menu
Offer small portions
Do not force or pressure
Provide repeated, neutral exposure
Serve family style meals

Behavioral Milestones

The preschool years are an important time for developing healthy habits for life. From 2 to 5 years old, children grow and develop in ways that affect behavior in all areas, including eating. The timing of these milestones may vary with each child.

**2-5
year
olds!**



2 YEARS

- Can use a spoon and drink from a cup
- Can be easily distracted
- Growth slows and appetite drops
- Develops likes and dislikes
- Can be very messy
- May suddenly refuse certain foods



3 YEARS

- Makes simple either/or food choices, such as a choice of apple or orange slices
- Pours liquid with some spills
- Comfortable using fork and spoon
- Can follow simple requests such as "Please use your napkin."
- Starts to request favorite foods
- Likes to imitate cooking
- May suddenly refuse certain foods



4 YEARS

- Influenced by TV, media, and peers
- May dislike many mixed dishes
- Rarely spills with spoon or cup
- Knows what table manners are expected
- Can be easily sidetracked
- May suddenly refuse certain foods



5 YEARS

- Has fewer demands
- Will usually accept the food that's available
- Dresses and eats with minor supervision

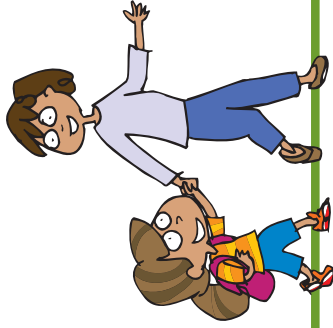
ECE Providers can support healthy feeding practices

- Create a consistent meal/snack routine with adequate time so children are not rushed
- Provide a variety of healthy options
- Maintain a relaxed, pleasant environment during meals and snacks
- Minimize mealtime distractions
- Eat with children
- Implement Family Style Dining

Division of Responsibility in Feeding	
Adults are responsible for:	Infants are responsible for:
What to Feed	When to eat How much to eat Whether they eat what is offered
Adults are Responsible for:	Toddlers and Preschooler are responsible for:
What to feed When to feed Where to feed	How much to eat Whether they eat what is offered

Effective Verbal Comments

- Make Specific Comments
- Be enthusiastic
-
-



Phrases that *HELP* and *HINDER*

As the caregiver, you play the biggest role in your child's eating behavior. What you say has an impact on developing healthy eating habits. Negative phrases can easily be changed into positive, helpful ones!



Phrases that *HINDER*

INSTEAD OF ...

Eat that for me.

If you do not eat one more bite, I will be mad.

Phrases like these teach your child to eat for your approval and love. This can lead your child to have unhealthy behaviors, attitudes, and beliefs about food and about themselves.

INSTEAD OF ...

You're such a big girl; you finished all your peas.

Jenny, look at your sister. She ate all of her bananas.

You have to take one more bite before you leave the table.

Phrases like these teach your child to ignore fullness. It is better for kids to stop eating when full or satisfied than when all of the food has been eaten.

INSTEAD OF ...

See, that didn't taste so bad, did it?

This implies to your child that he or she was wrong to refuse the food. This can lead to unhealthy attitudes about food or self.

INSTEAD OF ...

No dessert until you eat your vegetables.

Stop crying and I will give you a cookie.

Offering some foods, like dessert, in reward for finishing others, like vegetables, makes some foods seem better than others. Getting a food treat when upset teaches your child to eat to feel better. This can lead to overeating.

Phrases that *HELP*

TRY ...

This is kiwi fruit; it's sweet like a strawberry.

These radishes are very crunchy!

Phrases like these help to point out the sensory qualities of food. They encourage your child to try new foods.

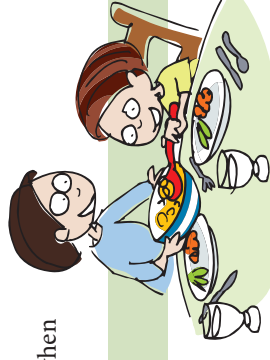
TRY ...

Is your stomach telling you that you're full?

Is your stomach still making its hungry growling noise?

Has your tummy had enough?

Phrases like these help your child to recognize when he or she is full. This can prevent overeating.



TRY ...

Do you like that?

Which one is your favorite?

Everybody likes different foods, don't they?

Phrases like these make your child feel like he or she is making the choices. It also shifts the focus toward the taste of food rather than who was right.

TRY ...

We can try these vegetables again another time. Next time would you like to try them raw instead of cooked?

I am sorry you are sad. Come here and let me give you a big hug.

Reward your child with attention and kind words. Comfort him or her with hugs and talks. Show love by spending time and having fun together.

Mealtime Conversations Starters

Brainstorm four conversation starters to use with preschoolers during meals and snacks.

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.

Additional conversation starters can be found at
<https://www.health.ny.gov/prevention/nutrition/resources/chattingmeal.htm>

Family Style Dining

Family style dining is a meal service that encourages healthy habits and supports the Division of Responsibility in feeding. Children have control of the choices that go on their plate. There is a feeling of safety that comes with this control, and children can consider foods within this safe space.

What does family style dining look like?

Children help set the table

Food is placed on the table in small containers with child-sized utensils

Beverages are served in small pitchers

Children serve themselves all food and beverages

Adults sit at the table with children and role model by eating the same foods

How does family style dining benefit children?

Children experience exposure to a variety of foods without pressure

Children practice serving portion sizes and listen to internal hunger cues

Children gain independence and cooperation skills

Children eat more fruits and vegetables when they observe peers and adults enjoying these foods

Children engage in conversation

Children's books about food and eating

Growing Vegetable Soup by Lois Ehlert
Rooftop Garden by Danna Smith
Foodie Faces by Bill and Claire Wurtzel
Round is a Tortilla by Roseanne Thong
Bilal cooks Daal! by Aisha Saeed
Bee-bin Bop! by Linda Sue Park

Meal Time Practices Reflection Activity

Think about your practices during meals and snacks. Indicate how each of the practices listed below it fits into your daily practices.

	Rarely or Never	Sometimes	Most times	All the time
Eating Environment				
1. Meal time is relaxed and calm				
2. Toddler and preschooler meals are served family style (children encouraged to serve themselves with limited help)				
3. Early childhood providers sit with children during meals and talk informally about trying and enjoying healthy food				
4. Early childhood providers help children learn to recognize hunger/fullness cues				
5. Early childhood providers eat the same meals/snacks as the children and avoid unhealthy foods (e.g., soda, sweets, fast food)				
6. Providers gently offer children unfamiliar foods, knowing that a child may need to sample a new food ten or more times before learning to like it.				
7. Food or beverages are used as an incentive or reward*				
8. Food or beverages are withheld as punishment*				
Water				
9. Drinking water is available when children are outdoors				
Adult Beverages/Role Modeling				
10. Early childhood providers drink sugar-sweetened beverages in front of children*				

Supporting Families

The need for emergency food resources has increased across many communities. As an early care and education professional, sharing your knowledge of important community resources related to food and nutrition can support families and increase access to healthy foods.

SNAP — the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program, formerly known as Food Stamps. SNAP provides nutrition benefits to supplement the food budget of needy families so they can purchase healthy food. Household income is the main criteria for determining eligibility.

WIC — Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants, and Children, known as WIC, provides supplemental foods to pregnant, post-partum and breastfeeding women and children up to age 5. The WIC program also provides breastfeeding support, well-child checks and referrals.

CACFP — The Child and Adult Care Food Program reimburses child care programs and homes for meals and snacks that meet the Nutritional guidelines to eligible children. Reimbursement rates are based upon the child's eligibility for free, reduced-price, or paid meals.

Other food and nutrition support include:

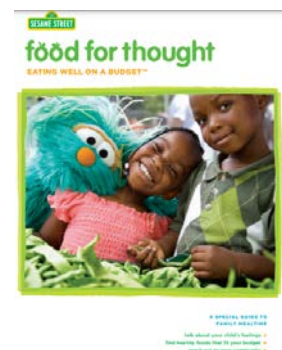
Summer Food Program sites
Emergency food resources in your community
-Hours & Location of Food Pantries & Banks

Engaging with Families

Some opportunities for connecting with families around food include:

- Taste Testing events
- Cooking events or classes
- Produce basket pick up at child care
- Coupon swap board
- Community gardens/ECE gardens

Resources for Families



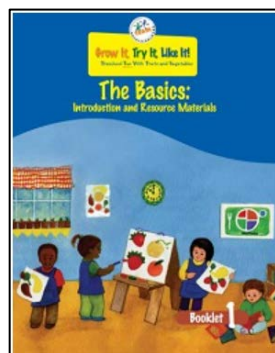
<https://myplate-prod.azureedge.us/sites/default/files/2021-03/HealthyTipsforPickyEaters.pdf>
theicn.org/cacfp#2c5b3c0b1a0528a11
sesamestreet.org/toolkits/food/resources

ABC PLAN

Instructions: Refer back to the reflection checklist on the previous page and select one or more best practice you will add, or strengthen, in your daily routines with children. Complete the Action Plan below.

A ction I plan to take	
How does this action B enefit children	
C hallenges I may face	
D ate I will begin	
E vidence of success	

Resources



Savory Sensory Learning