

FitFUTURE

Strategies for
Better Living.

10 TIPS

for Fostering Health Eating Habits in Children



by Jennifer Kerr, MS, RD, CDN

1 **Keep to a schedule.**

Children need to eat every three to four hours: three meals, two snacks, and lots of fluids. If you plan for these, your child's diet will be much more balanced.

2 **Plan meals.**

A good dinner should be balanced with food items that include: whole-grain bread, rice, or pasta; a fruit or a vegetable; and a protein source like lean meat, cheese, or beans.

3 **No kids meals.**

Children often mimic their parents' behavior, so one of these days, they'll eat most of the food you serve them.

4 **Hold Comments.**

As hard as this may be, try not to comment on what or how much your kids are eating. Be as neutral as possible. Remember, you've done your job as a parent by serving balanced meals; your kids are responsible for eating them.

5 **Introduce new foods.**

Children are new-food-phobic by nature. Introduce new foods slowly, and alongside familiar, well-accepted foods.

6 **Try dips.**

If your kids won't eat vegetables, experiment with dips. Children might like hummus, salsa, and yogurt-based dressings.

7 **Get kids involved.**

If your children become involved in choosing or preparing meals, they'll be more interested in eating what they've created. Take them to the store, and let them choose produce for you. If they're old enough, allow them to cut up vegetables and mix them into a salad.

8 **Cut back on unhealthy foods.**

Remember, you—not your kids—are in charge of the foods that enter the house. By having fewer junk foods around, you'll force your children to eat more fruits, vegetables, whole grains, and dairy products.

9 **Be a role model.**

If you're constantly on a diet or have erratic eating habits, your children will grow up thinking that this sort of behavior is normal. Be honest with yourself about the kinds of food messages you're sending.

10 **Adjust your attitude.**

Realize that what your kids eat over time is what matters. Having popcorn at the movies or eating an ice-cream sundae is fine. As long as you balance these with smart food choices and physical activity.