

Good Mealtime Habits



DID YOU KNOW?

Studies show that children who have meals with family members eat healthier and feel better about themselves.

- ✓ **Eat together.** By sitting down together, you'll build your toddler's language and social skills while encouraging healthy eating habits.
- ✓ **Have meals and snacks at about the same times each day.** Having a routine lets your toddler focus on trying a variety of foods and learning the skills to feed themselves. "Grazing" between meals and snacks can become an unhealthy habit that's also harmful to teeth.
- ✓ **Make mealtimes learning times.** Mealtimes can help your toddler develop fine motor skills (like picking up pieces of food with their fingers), language skills (like talking and listening), and social skills (like saying "please" and "thank you").
- ✓ **Reduce distractions.** Turn off the TV and keep toys and phones away from the table. This puts the focus on eating and conversation and helps you follow your toddler's fullness cues. (See Eating Well)
- ✓ **Don't worry about the mess.** Exploring food with their eyes, hands and mouth is an important – and often messy! – part of your child's learning. They may also drop food on the floor, by mistake or on purpose. Be patient, and have a wet cloth nearby for post-meal cleanup.



TRY THIS

When you'll be away from home for meals or snack times, pack nutritious foods like dry cereal, sliced boiled egg, cheese and crackers, cut-up soft fruits, and soft vegetables with hummus. You'll save money and eat better.



BRAIN BUILDER

Build language skills by turning off the TV and putting away other screens during meals. Use the time to talk as a family instead.

