

TIPS TO USE ON THE MEAL TIME FAMILY TIME DISPLAY

From Eating Well But Cooking Less

Snack Time/Family Time

Avoid eating in front of the TV. Kids as well as adults can easily overeat.

Although kids may make a mess when cooking, they are more likely to eat what they make, which makes mealtime more pleasant.

Scheduled meals and snacks help kids manage their appetites and weight.

Children need 2 to 3 snacks each day besides 3 meals. If mealtime has been too hectic, take a few minutes to eat a snack with your child and relax.

Ethnic type foods are a great way to open the discussion about diversity and tolerance.

Serve a simple meal as an indoor picnic when the weather is bad.

Try to spend an evening a week doing family activities such as scrapbooking, games or puzzles.

Let kids prepare and serve a meal to adults.

Sometimes schedules are too busy to have family mealtime at every meal or even everyday. Plan so that it happens several times a week.

If kids are hungry and dinner isn't ready, give them small servings of food from the meal such as the applesauce. This will help to avoid any conflicts before dinner.

Start the meal off right by having everyone discuss something they are looking forward to such as a visit from grandma or a trip to the park.

Have the kids name all the colors of their food at a meal.

Kids can benefit from interacting with people of all ages. If grandparents don't live near by, invite an older neighbor to dinner once in a while.

Use foods and mealtimes to teach counting such as "How many sections are in your grapefruit?"

Spend time talking about where food comes from such as fruits and vegetables and how they grow.

Keep quick breakfast food on hand, so that everyone will have time to sit down and eat.

Some kids don't like their foods mixed. Some like the meat sauce separate from the noodles.

Keep comments about eating positive.

Use foods to teach kids about shapes: round, square, oval, rectangular, long or flat.

Use mealtime to talk about flavors of food: salty, sweet, sour, bitter, spicy or bland.

Make sure kids know that it is okay not to like something.

Everyone has likes and dislikes. Don't force children to eat foods that they don't like. This makes mealtime unpleasant and can lead to poor, life-long eating habits.

Work on numbers and math. Have kids count different foods such as the grapes.

Name colors eaten at the meal.

Mealtime is a great time to talk about family stories and growing up.

Mealtime is a great time to teach children language skills such as vocabulary. Teach names of different foods and terms used in cooking.

Mealtime doesn't always have to be inside. When weather permits, eat outside.

Start with smaller portions, eat slowly and then wait a few minutes to see if you are really hungry for that second helping. Help you children regulate their intake by encouraging them to do the same.

For late risers on the week-ends, have family brunch instead of breakfast.

Some children will want the same foods over and over again. Don't make a big issue over this but also avoid short order cooking. Try to offer favorite food at each meal and encourage them to try all foods that are offered.

Use family mealtime to plan future menus. Kids who have a choice in what they have to eat are more likely to eat it.

Practice good manners at mealtime.

Breakfast may be a better time for eating together if the evening are too hectic or parents work different shifts.

Use mealtime to teach children about nutrition: pasta gives us energy, meat gives protein to repair tissues, spinach and tomatoes give us vitamins for good health.

Kids who eat breakfast make fewer trips to the school nurses office complaining of a stomach ache. Is breakfast in your house a family habit?

Start a family tradition by choosing someone to be the "star" at that meal. The "star" get to be served first and can choose the topic of conversation.

When the family is ready to eat, turn off the TV and take time to enjoy the food and the company.