



First Nations Health Authority
Health through wellness

Children's Oral Health Initiative (COHI)

Raising Good Eaters

Parents and children develop healthy eating habits together

PARENT

Decides what, when and where to eat

Parents Feeding Tasks

Choose and prepare foods: Do your best to offer foods that are right for the age and stage of your children.

Provide regular meals and snacks: Offer 3 meals and 2 or 3 snacks each day. This helps to teach trust.

Make eating time pleasant: For children, the most important thing at the table is YOU or another grown up they trust. They will try more if you are eating with them.

Teach your Child: Children want to learn to eat like you do. If you only offer foods that your child already knows and likes, it takes away the chance to learn to like other foods.

Don't let your child graze: Children graze when they carry around a bottle or sip cup of milk or juice and ask for snacks when it's not meal or snack time. Grazing puts your child at risk for cavities. When children graze it's easier for them to fill up on less nutritious, convenient treats. They find it harder to learn to like new foods and are often not hungry at meal times.

CHILD

Decides how much and whether to eat

Child's Feeding Tasks

To eat or not to eat:

It's normal for a child's appetite to vary from day to day.

Allowing children to choose how much to eat at meal and snack times teaches them to eat to their own personal appetite.

Children who are good eaters

- Feel good about eating.
- Naturally eat as much as they need and grow in the way that is right for them.
- Learn to eat the food their parents eat.
- Enjoy family meals and learn to behave well at mealtime.





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Frequently Asked Questions

Why is an eating routine so important?

- Helps prevent all day snacking.
- Helps establish good eating habits early.
- Contributes to good oral health and reduces the chance of tooth decay.
- A child learns to trust and is comforted when a routine is established.

My parents never worried about routine when I was growing up?

For some families, eating regular meals is a new thing. Meal times would depend on what you were doing that day. Children were often fed whenever they were hungry and this was not a problem because only foods such as fish, wild meats and berries were available. Children were not given sweet foods like cookies, granola bars and juice boxes very often.

I am worried that my child doesn't eat enough at meal and snack times so I feed him whenever he says he is hungry.

- Children will not starve themselves.
- If a child refuses to eat at meal or snack time they may not be hungry or they may not want to eat the food you have offered.
- They will be hungrier at the next meal/snack and may eat more and try new foods.
- Offer small portions. Allow children to ask for more of the foods you have provided.

How can I role model good eating behavior for my child?

- Eat meals together as a family as often as possible.
- Eat a variety of foods. This encourages your child to try them too.
- Eat three meals a day and snacks as required to honour your own hunger and sense of fullness.
- Sit down at the table to eat.

My child is hungry before the next 'scheduled' snack or meal time.

- If sweet foods are offered often, children will complain of hunger because they want a treat like a cookie. A child who is truly hungry will eat a healthy snack such as an apple or cheese.
- Guide children who ask for a snack to another activity until it is snack time.
- If they still complain of hunger, offer a healthy food choice such as a vegetable or fruit.
- Offer a drink of water. Children often complain of hunger when they are thirsty.

Should I force my child to eat?

NO! Children enjoy food less when they are pressured or rewarded to eat.

How can I establish a good routine? We are usually rushed in the morning.

- Studies show that children who eat breakfast do better at school.
- Set your alarm a few minutes early to allow more time for eating.
- Prepare lunches the night before.
- Set the table for breakfast the night before.
- Keep the TV off so children can focus on what they are eating.