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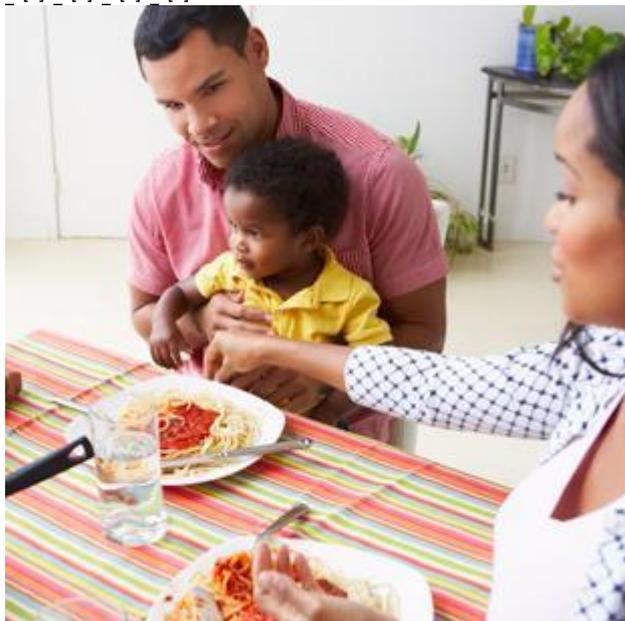


Eating Together

Eating is an essential human function. Every country and every civilisation has created its own eating habits and cuisine. Teaching healthy eating habits to children is something parents may take for granted but it can sometimes be difficult when everyone has different taste preferences, or your child refuses to eat certain foods.

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By eating together and enjoying your family meal, you are:

- Encouraging your child to imitate you
- Showing your child that eating is something enjoyable and entertaining
- Treating yourself to better eating habits

How do you do it?

- Find quick and easy recipes, and always have the basic ingredients on hand
- Settle down comfortably at the table and take your time
- Lead by example – children love to see their parents doing the same thing they are

Some practical tips

When you can, make meals with your child

Show your child what you're doing and explain things as you go along. Get them to take part (even if they are very small, they can go to the shops with you to find out about fruits and vegetables). Saying the names of the foods you are including assists in their learning and they will see that those foods are the ones we eat most often in a healthy diet.

A child's sense of taste is not the same as an adult's; it is often more sensitive. This is not a reason to limit children's exposure to strong-flavoured foods, but instead, offer them in small amounts so that they get used to them. Offer any new foods with foods you know your child likes – it will increase their success and won't limit them to just the new food to eat.

If your child likes a food:

Repeat the experience several times, presenting it in the same way, so that your child takes pleasure in finding the food again and remembering it. Then, later, you can vary the same recipe and come up with different presentations.

Encourage your child to like vegetables

Some young children don't like to eat fruit and vegetables, at least initially. You can help them through this phase by:

- Offering them fruit and vegetables regularly and in a variety of ways. Children eat what is familiar to them. Including new fruit and vegetables in already accepted recipes

- Involving them in the decision making process – what fruit would you like for your snack? What vegetables would you like with your dinner tonight?

Praise your child whenever they try them – even the smallest amount.

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