

Building healthy habits

Children are learning habits that will often last them a lifetime. Consider the following:

- Breakfast is important. Children who eat breakfast have better concentration. Eating breakfast can reduce snacking on high-energy foods in the afternoon in both adults and children.
- Be realistic about the size of the serve you offer children. Forcing children to finish what is on their plate when they are not hungry may lead to overeating and/or strong food dislikes.
- Serve meals or snacks at a table rather than in front of the television. Children and adults can miss their body's cues when they are full and are more likely to overeat. Limiting television also reduces their exposure to junk food advertising.
- Avoid giving children processed snack foods high in sugar. Encourage brushing teeth in the morning and before bed to develop good dental habits.
- You play an important role in promoting healthy habits. Set a good example by eating healthy foods and enjoying regular exercise. It may not be apparent, but your child is watching you!

Children know their bodies

Use a child's appetite to guide how much food they need for activity and growth. Don't try and force children to finish their plate or give sweets or dessert as rewards as this may lead to overeating problems later on. Instead offer a variety of healthy foods. Children do not eat the same amount of food every day. The amount of food a child may need depends on what else has been eaten that day.