

Nurturing Healthy Eaters

IN EARLY LEARNING AND CHILD CARE



WHEN A MEAL/SNACK IS PROVIDED BY FAMILIES

Family Decides

What food to offer

Child Care Provider Decides

When and where children eat

Child Decides

Whether and how much to eat

WHEN A MEAL/SNACK IS PROVIDED BY CHILD CARE FACILITIES

Child Care Provider Decides

What food to offer, when and where children eat

Child Decides

Whether and how much to eat

Positive Eating Environment

- Stick to scheduled meal and snack times – avoid offering food between meals and snacks.
- Limit distractions such as screens and toys.
- Sit and eat with children.
- Talk with children in casual conversation – What was the highlight of your day? If you could have a superpower, what would it be?
- Teach mealtime manners – saying please and thank you, passing food, serving themselves, etc.

Natural Hunger & Fullness Cues

- Allow children to decide if they want to eat and how much – they do not need a certain number of bites.
- Allow children to eat food in any order they choose – no need to finish one food before another.
- Trust and respect children when they say or signal that they are full or still hungry.

Each child's body is different, and we should respect, accept, and celebrate these differences!

Build Trust with Children & Families

- Respect that families may define “healthy food” differently and children have different health needs.
- Allow children to eat all foods sent from home unless the food relates to an allergy. Children need to trust that their caregivers can feed them properly and child care providers need to trust this as well.

- Support all families by encouraging access to reliable nutrition information such as Dial-a-Dietitian Manitoba 1-877-830-2892 (outside of Winnipeg) or 204-788-8242 (within Winnipeg) or www.unlockfood.ca.
- Refer families to breakfast, snack or lunch programs and other community food resources (such as food banks) when needed.

Teach Food & Nutrition in a Positive Way

- Keep all messages about food neutral. Discuss where foods come from, how foods look and feel and ways to eat different foods; rather than referring to food as good versus bad or healthy versus unhealthy.
- Allow children to explore food with all their senses. Playing with food is part of learning, exploring and accepting new foods.
- Create fun activities for children around food, like pretend play, activity stations, mystery food activity, trips to the grocery store, and gardening.
- Include children in mealtime jobs to teach numbers and reading – count the number of plates needed, measure ingredients, read recipes together.

Snack and mealtime should be enjoyable



General eating advice: The eating advice in this article is based on Ellyn Satter's principles and guidelines.

For more about Satter's work, see: ellynsatterinstitute.org

Resource provided by the registered dietitians of the Manitoba Food Environments for Early Learning and Schools (MB FEELS) Committee. Contact us for permission to modify this resource: MBFEELSCommittee@gmail.com