



## Encouraging Healthy Eating

Children successfully grow, learn and develop when they eat a variety of healthy foods in child-sized portions. Healthy foods include fruits, vegetables, breads, cereal, yogurt, milk and meats. While getting young children to eat healthy foods is sometimes a challenge, there are many ways to encourage healthy eating and promote good nutrition. Here's how:

### **YOUR INFANT (under age 2):**

- Breastfeed your infant when possible. Breast milk contains everything your baby needs, it is easier to digest, it helps protect against disease, and it is free. If breastfeeding isn't possible, give your baby formula – never cow's milk – until age one.
- Wean your baby from the bottle by age 1.

### **YOUR TODDLER (2-3 year olds):**

- Give your toddler 3 meals and 2 healthy snacks each day. Let your child determine how much to eat; parents should determine what and when.
- Offer new food options. Try: pineapple instead of apples, hummus instead of cheese on crackers, provolone cheese instead of cheddar, dried fruit instead of fruit chews, popcorn instead of chips, or pita instead of bread. Freeze yogurt for a healthy treat.
- Take your toddler food shopping at the grocery store or the local Farmer's Market. Have your child look at the fresh fruits & vegetables and pick a new one to try for dinner. If fresh fruits & vegetables are not available, check out the frozen food section.

### **YOUR PRESCHOOLER (4 year olds):**

- Put healthy snacks where your child can easily reach them. Place rinsed and cut fruits and vegetables on an easy to see shelf in your refrigerator or have snack bags full of nuts, cereal, or granola bars in an easy to reach cupboard.
- Make healthy food fun. Try frozen bananas, cut food into fun shapes – such as heart shaped sandwiches, spell words with pretzel sticks, decorate a baked potato with veggies, or make fruit smoothies.
- Talk about healthy foods. Cover a table with a large piece of paper and ask your child to make a mural of their favorite healthy foods using colored pencils, crayons or magazine clippings. Together, make a list or draw some nutritious foods your family should try.
- Let your child plan the dinner menu; be sure there are fruits and veggies on the menu! Then, have your child help you cook!

## Book Suggestions

Eating Right by Mary Elizabeth Salzmann • Everybody Cooks Rice by Norah Dooley •  
Fandango Stew by David Davis • Healthy Food by Adam Schafer •  
Healthy Eating by Emily Green • You Are What You Eat by Sharon Gordon