Making Mealtime Stress-Free

Routines make mealtime easier

Creating routines for meals and snacks can lead to healthy, lifelong habits. When children know the plan, mealtime is easier.

Key Elements of a Healthy Mealtime Routine:

**EAT MEALS TOGETHER!** Children watch habits from parents, older siblings, and peers. When the rest of the family eats well-balanced meals that include fruits and vegetables, children are more likely to do the same.

**TURN ELECTRONICS AND SCREENS OFF** and remove distractions during meals.

Offer meals and snacks at **SPECIFIC TIMES** and stick to 3 meals and 1-2 snacks each day.

Let your **CHILD’S HUNGER** be the guide. Allow the child to decide how much to eat.

**STAY POSITIVE!** Give praise for the successes of trying new foods.

**TRY NOT TO COMMENT** on how much of anything the child is eating.

Make mealtime an adventure!

A family meal can happen anywhere. You only need family, food, and conversation.

Talk about your day!

Try these questions:
- What made you smile today?
- What was your favorite activity today?
- Did anything make you sad today? If so, what was it?
- What act of kindness did you see today?

Ohio AAP PMP Mobile App

Search Parenting at Meal and Playtime on Apple Store or Google Play

App Highlights...
- Physician-endorsed materials for parents to access on-demand
- Resources for parents organized by age
- Text reminders sent monthly and/or for age milestones
- Easy sign-up
- Videos on feeding, play, nutrition and more

http://ohioaap.org/projects/PMP

12/2021
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Stick to Your Routine:
• Do not give food between meals and snacks. This will help your child come to meals and snacks hungry.
• Stick to 1-2 snacks each day.
• Let your child choose what and how much to eat from what’s offered. Avoid offering separate meals or snacks if they refuse to eat.
• Planning meals and preparing food ahead of time can help you keep set meal and snack times.

You Are the Example:
• Choose healthy foods! When parents show a willingness to try new foods, kids will, too.
• Try to eat only at planned meal and snack times to model this behavior for your child.
• Show an interest in learning about food, nutrition, farming, and cooking. Kids will also become interested in foods and learning what they taste like.

Other Helpful Tips:
• Talk with your child about the need for healthy food, then start slowly. Offer small amounts of new foods with the foods they like.
• Engage children in the process of choosing and preparing foods.
• Make a commitment to eat family meals together at least 2 - 3 times per week. Family mealtimes strengthen family relationships and allow for more balanced meals.