

Supportive Eating Environment



Mealtimes should be positive, enjoyable and provide children with opportunities to be exposed to a variety of healthy foods choices.



Tips for mealtimes:

- ✓ Safe and seated
- ✓ Educator sitting with the children
- ✓ Welcoming
- ✓ Positive language
- ✓ Minimise distractions
- ✓ Encourage social interaction

Yum! This red apple is so crunchy!

- ✗ Don't use food as a bribe or reward
- ✗ Don't push children to eat if they say they are not hungry or have had enough.



Educators should:

- 🍓 Engage in conversations
- 🍓 Show enthusiasm about the meal
- 🍓 Eat the same food as the children
- 🍓 Be patient with slow eaters
- 🍓 Not make a fuss over mess or uneaten food



Artwork: 'The Heart of a Child'
Worimi Artist Lara Went



Supporting Fussy Eaters



A happy and relaxed meal time reduces stress levels and helps children to develop good eating habits.

Try varying the way foods are prepared e.g. cooked, raw and crunchy, grated.



Don't assume a child dislikes a food. You may need to offer a new food up to **15** times for children to accept it!



Growing fruit and vegetables is a fun way for children to learn about food.



Role model by eating and enjoying a range of healthy foods yourself.

- X Don't use food as a bribe or reward.
- X Avoid grazing through the day. Have a predictable meal and snack routine.
- X Don't make mealtimes a battleground. Mealtimes should not be associated with stress.



Children love to help with food preparation!



Artwork: 'The Heart of a Child'
Worimi Artist Lara Went



Encouraging New Foods



Children can be reluctant to try new foods and need encouragement. It is important to expose children to a variety of food types and textures to broaden their preferences.



- ✓ Serve a small amount.
- ✓ Serve new foods alongside a familiar food they like eating.
- ✓ Include different coloured foods, interesting shapes and textures.
- ✓ Offer a small range of healthy foods in the middle of the table and let children choose what they would like to try.



Don't give up!
You may need to offer a new food up to **15** times for children to accept it.



Let children explore new foods by looking, smelling, touching and licking.



Discuss the colour, shape, flavour and texture.



Involve children in choosing new foods when shopping.



Artwork: 'The Heart of a Child'
Worimi Artist Lara Went



Supporting Healthy Eating Choices



We all make choices when it comes to eating. Individual food choices and appetites vary significantly, especially for children between the ages of 1-6 years. Here are some strategies for families and carers to support children in making healthy food choices.

How to support healthy eating choices

Families and Carers

Families and carers can support children at mealtimes by deciding:

1. **What type of food is provided**
2. **What time to eat**

This is particularly important for children who are exploring different food and eating choices. This process gives children access to a variety of foods, and provides a regular eating routine.

Children

Once the food is provided, children can then decide:

1. **If they want to eat**
2. **How much they want to eat**

Allowing children to make these choices supports their natural ability of knowing how much food their body needs, and helps them learn when they feel hungry or full.

Handy hints about child eating behaviours

- Children often balance out how much they eat over a few days (e.g. if they aren't hungry today they'll likely make up for it tomorrow).
- Children may use food as a way of exploring their independence (e.g. liking a food one day and refusing it the next).
- A lot of options on the plate can be overwhelming and cause children to eat less.



A useful tip: To understand how much a child is eating, track their appetite over a full week rather than one day or meal.



For easy ideas and tips of packing healthy lunchboxes visit: www.goodforkids.com.au

How do I tell if my child is eating enough?

If your child is happy, energetic and tracing well on their growth chart, they are likely eating enough.

What to do if you are concerned

If you are concerned about your child's diet or growth speak with your doctor or Child and Family Health Nurse.



Artwork: 'The Heart of a Child'
Worimi Artist Lara Went

Good for Kids would like to acknowledge *Munch & Move* and the *Raising Children Network (Australia)*, as the source of information for this resource.



Whole Service Approach



Taking a whole service approach ensures that staff, educators, families and the broader community are involved in supporting fussy eating. Here are some ideas to support your whole of service approach.

Educator collaboration

- Encourage professional development
- Work as a team to collaborate, share thoughts and ideas



Building relationships

- Build relationships between educators, children and cooks
- Involve service cooks in cooking experiences with children
- Harvest produce from vegetable gardens for preschool meals



Community connections

- Build gardens and small farms like a worm farm, at your service. Work with:
 - Local organisations
 - Local communities
- Share produce with communities



Orientation

- Communicate service expectations about healthy eating to
- Staff e.g. team meetings
- Families e.g. in newsletter
- Work with families to support children who are experiencing fussy eating

