

Raising a Healthy Happy Eater

Video Key Messages

Maintain the division of responsibility

Parents are responsible for deciding **what**, **where**, and **when** foods are offered. Children are responsible for deciding **whether** they eat and **how much** they eat.

Children are born with the ability to listen to their bodies. They eat when they are hungry and stop when they are full. When parents try to control how much children eat, it interferes with this natural ability.

Focus on feeding your child and allow your child to focus on eating.

Normal eating habits of children

It is normal for children's likes and dislikes and the amount of food they eat to change from day to day. Young children often prefer their foods not touch or be mixed together.

Eating is a learning process and children rely on their senses of sight, touch, smell, sound, and taste to experience a food before trying it. It can take offering a new food 12 or more times before a child may accept it. New foods take time and it is important they are offered without pressure.

Avoid pressure and restriction

Using forms of pressure or restriction often results in mealtime battles and your child doing the opposite of what you want. Pressure can look like 'one more bite', bartering, punishment, rewards, or praise. Restriction includes controlling the amount or type of food your child eats. Pressure and restriction tactics do not work and can teach children to ignore their bodies' cues of hunger and fullness.

Eat together

Children learn from watching others around them. Plan to sit and enjoy meals together as often as possible. To create positive mealtimes:

- Remove all distractions such as TV, phones, tablets, and toys.
- Provide comfortable and supportive seating.
- Keep conversation topics positive and avoid focusing on the type or amount of food eaten.

Help your child learn about food

Involving your child in food traditions, gardening, and planning or preparing meals, helps build the foundation for a healthy relationship with food. It also helps your child develop fine motor skills and learn about math, science, language, food skills and more.

This resource is intended to supplement the Raising a Healthy Happy Eater video and should not be used as a stand-alone resource. If you have questions or concerns about your child's eating, please talk with your healthcare provider.



Developed by SHA Public Health Nutritionists

Healthy People, Healthy Saskatchewan

The Saskatchewan Health Authority works in the spirit of truth and reconciliation, acknowledging Saskatchewan as the traditional territory of First Nations and Métis People.



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CS-PIER-0199

PIER - Patient Information and Education Resource

Area: Provincial
OCTOBER 2024