

# Supporting Children During Meal Times



Meal and snack times can be good learning opportunities for children to enjoy healthy meals and build social skills with their friends. School staff can play a key role to support children gain healthy eating habits. Here are some tips to support children at meal times.

## Be a positive role model

Children learn by example. What you say and do can support children to have a positive attitude about food and their bodies. Do not talk about body size, dieting or weight. Avoid making negative comments about the food or the amount a child is eating.

## Eat together and keep mealtimes calm and pleasant

Sit down and eat with children. Keep mealtimes calm and pleasant. Talk about fun things that kids enjoy. Eating together helps them feel comfortable and safe to try new foods.



## Let children decide how much to eat

Children have built-in signals for feeling hungry and full. It is important for them to learn to listen to their bodies and eat when their bodies tell them to. Let them pick what they want to eat from their lunch. Children eat less when they are forced or bribed to eat.

## Rethink food rewards

Using any food as rewards, like candies, can lead to poor eating habits and a preference for these foods.

## Be food safe

Ask children to clear off their desk before eating. Also have them wash their hands before and after eating.



## Be food allergy aware

Know which children in the class have an allergy. Get training on what to do if a child has an allergic reaction. Follow classroom/school guidelines about food allergies. Bring foods that will not trigger a student's allergy.