

Client Name _____ Date _____

RD/DTR _____

Email _____ Phone _____

Feeding Tips for Preschool-Age Children

As the caregiver, you are responsible for what your child is offered to eat and where and when it is given. Your child is then responsible for how much food he or she eats. Once this is understood, you are more likely to avoid struggles and control issues.

Mealtime Tips

Before the meal

- Involve your child in meal planning, coupon cutting, food shopping, and food preparation. He or she can help you with tasks such as setting the table, breaking eggs, or loading the dishwasher.
- Make sure the eating area is quiet, pleasant, and safe for meals and snacks. Turn off the TV or radio so your child is not distracted.
- Plan a few minutes of quiet time before each meal. A tired or excited child may not be interested in eating.
- Ask your child to wash his or her hands before meals and snacks.
- Seat your child at a table for both meals and snacks, and do not allow him or her to eat while walking or playing. Make sure the seat is at a good height for her or him to be comfortable and have the feet supported. The table should be at your child's stomach level.

During the meal

- Serve meals and snacks (or six small meals) at about the same time every day, with enough time for your child to become hungry between feedings.
- Always supervise your child during meals and snacks.
- Serve the child most of the foods that the rest of the family is eating. Avoid being a short-order cook.
- Provide small portions and allow your child to ask for seconds if he or she is still hungry. A quick rule of thumb for serving sizes is $\frac{1}{4}$ of an adult serving size.
- If your child does not eat a meal, do not worry too much—children usually make up for this at later meals or over the course of a couple of days.
- Serve foods warm and not too hot.



- Preschoolers do not like foods to be combined or put together—do not worry if your child wants to take apart sandwiches and pizza.
- Model healthy eating habits and manners. Remember, your child will follow your example. Teaching healthy eating habits and manners can be regular part of mealtimes.
- Present desserts and sweets as the usual last course of the meal. Do not use desserts and sweets as a reward for finishing a meal. This teaches your child that dessert is the best part of the meal, increases his or her taste for sweet foods, and may cause him or her to eat less non-sweet foods.
- When your child is done eating, allow him or her to leave the table rather than disturb others who may still be eating.

If your child will not eat new foods

- Offer your child just one bite of a new food.
- It is best not to trick, bribe, or force a child into trying a new food.
- It may take several introductions of the food before the child will pick it up and try it.
- Provide a mix of favorite foods, along with a small amount of new or previously disliked foods.
- If your child refuses a food after 3 attempts, reintroduce it after several days or weeks, because a child's preference and appetite often changes.

Notes: