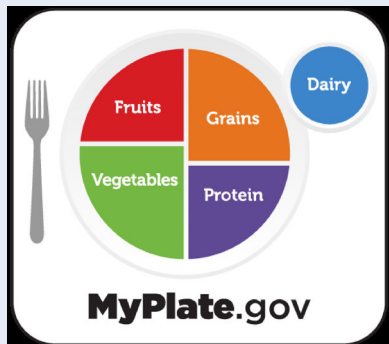


Encouraging Excellent Eating Early

Interested in giving your young child a taste for healthy eating right from the start? Kids can react strongly to the foods they are offered – healthy or not! They may push them away, refuse to open their mouth, shake their head, or more. What is a parent or caregiver to do?

With a few child-feeding tips and advice on how to set a positive tone for balanced, healthy eating, anyone can be a child-feeding pro!



MYPLATE CAN HELP!

Make every bite count with MyPlate by offering a variety of nutritious options from each food group – fruits, vegetables, grains, dairy, and protein foods – including those that provide unsaturated fats and are low in added sugar and sodium. From apples to avocados, corn tortillas to queso fresco, and pork to parsley, you can offer your child a variety of colors, textures, and flavors.

Once you know what to feed, it's time to master how to do it. Read on for our best tips to help young kids build healthy plates.

SETTING THE TABLE FOR SUCCESS

Mealtime is family time. Even ten minutes of eating together can increase children's fruit and vegetable intake. Start this habit with your baby or toddler by bringing them to the table with you!

Your child may only be eating baby food but include them at meals to increase their exposure to table food by seeing the foods you eat.[^]

It can take up to 15 exposures before a food is "trusted" and tasted. Use the exposure time to describe the food.*

Tasting is just the first step – it can take 10 to 15 more exposures before they like the food. This means it could take 30 exposures in total before your child enjoys the food.*



If your child eats the same foods as you, ensure their food has no added sugar or sodium. If adding these to your food, set aside their portion first.[^]

Each exposure can look different. Meats can be ground or shredded while vegetables can be cubed, cut into strips, or mashed.

[^]USDA & HHS. Dietary Guidelines for Americans, 2020-2025. 9th Edition. December 2020.

*Scaglione, S et al. Factors Influencing Children's Eating Behaviours. Nutrients 2018.

MEALTIME IN ACTION

This pork looks juicy, feels soft, and is warm!



The tortilla is soft, what colors do you see on it?

This avocado is green, sounds squishy, and feels smooth.

The vegetables are different colors, which ones do you see?

GOING BEYOND 'YUCK' and 'YUM'

What does it look like?

Colorful
Dry
Juicy
Runny

Goosey
Bumpy
Shiny

What does it feel like?

Chewy
Creamy
Crunchy
Dry

Wet
Mushy
Smooth
Sticky

What does it taste like?

Spicy
Sour

Sweet
Tart

What does it smell like?

Strong
Fresh
Minty

Smokey
Fruity

What temperature is it?

Cool
Cold
Freezing

Hot
Warm

What does it sound like?

Crunchy
Crispy

Sizzling
Squishy

POWERFUL WORDS TO USE DURING MEALTIME

"Good job trying a new food!"

"Wow! Did you notice everybody likes different foods on their plate?"

"What vegetable would you like to eat tomorrow?"

REFUSING FOOD? TRY THESE NEUTRAL PHRASES

"We can try this fruit together again another time."

"Next time, would you like to try your potatoes soft and smooth like mashed potatoes instead of roasted in pieces?"

"When you are ready, you can give it a try."

TIPS TO REMEMBER WHILE YOU PRACTICE YOUR NEW POWER LANGUAGE

- As a parent or caregiver, you decide what, when, and where the child eats; the child decides if and how much they will eat.
- Introduce new foods with current favorites – this may help acceptance.
- Young children don't eat a lot of food at a time, so they do not need to eat a certain amount at each sitting.
- Add 1-2 tablespoons of each food at the table on your child's plate. Follow their lead, if your child eats a food, offer more- one tablespoon at a time.
- Because they eat small amounts at a time, make every bite count with healthy choices.



Visit https://wicworks.fns.usda.gov/sites/default/files/media/document/English_ReducingRiskofChokinginYoungChildren.pdf for information about choking hazards in children.

Created by Hass Avocado Board, National CACFP Sponsors Association, and National Pork Board, members of the MyPlate National Strategic Partnership Program. This resource was reviewed by USDA CNPP for alignment with MyPlate. It is the policy of USDA not to endorse any commercial enterprise, product, or publication.