

ABC's of Children's Eating

1

Plan Meals: 4 - 5 Per Day

Unplanned meals usually result in poor choices: Higher fat, higher sugar, higher sodium. Frequent meals are needed for young children: 2-6 year olds should eat 4-5 small meals a day. That's one meal every 2 hours or so. But remember, we're not talking about preparing five-course feasts. A piece of fruit, a cup of low fat yogurt, a bowl of soup, a slice of whole grain bread with a peanut butter spread can all make for nutritious meals.

2

Make Sure Children Eat a Variety of Foods

To help your child achieve this, try introducing one new food per week; and don't hesitate to experiment with cuisine. Has your child ever tried Chinese, Italian, Mexican? Taking them out to try these foods (or bringing them in) is a fun way to expand their food horizons.

3

Breakfast: The Most Important Meal of the Day

A recent Minnesota study that found school children that ate breakfast had fewer disciplinary problems, fewer visits to the nurse and higher test scores.

Also remember, that a good breakfast does not have to consist of what adults consider "appropriate" breakfast food. You might not want a cold slice of pizza, chicken soup or a sandwich in the morning, but if that's what your child wants to eat... well, that's much better than no breakfast.

4

More Veggies, More Fruit

Getting your child to eat the recommended five servings a day of fruits and veggies may sound difficult. Try fruit on cereal for breakfast, a celery stick with some peanut butter spread after school, peas and carrots mixed in with the mashed potatoes at dinner, and a banana mixed with some non-fat ice cream or yogurt while watching TV? Snack on raw veggies instead of chips or candy bars.

5

(Occasional) Sweets for the Sweet

If you completely prohibit sweets, chances are your child may rebel and eat even more of them down the road. Instead of just saying no — say "yes," once in awhile. Allow sweets as an occasional part of the diet (2-3 times a week).

For more tips on children's nutrition, visit: www.celebratehealthyeating.org

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(906) 228-9203
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