

Lifelong Journey: Healthy Habits

MODULE THREE

ENCOURAGING NEW EXPERIENCES

We know how easy it is to stay in our comfort zone when it comes to our daily routines. Think back to your childhood and your experiences trying new foods. New foods often mean new textures and colors, unknown flavors, and interesting combinations. We now know that forcing, bribing, rewarding, and punishing doesn't work, so what can we do as providers to encourage the children we care for to taste new things?

Many child care providers have found success involving children in mealtime. Not only does this allow children to take responsibility and be a part of something, they also learn that they can help prepare and enjoy meals at home. By participating, children are more open to tasting the food they are cooking, even if it is new to them. Involvement could vary in many different situations:

- You might have a garden that the children tend to and then help prepare the food.
- Children can participate in pre- and post-mealtime activities such as setting the table and clearing the table after eating.
- Age appropriate kitchen skills for:

2 years: pour pre-measured dry ingredients, wash and tear salad greens, carry unbreakable items to the table.

3 years: pour pre-measured liquids into a bowl, mix ingredients, spread soft spreads, knead dough, rinse produce, wrap potatoes in foil.

4-5 years: scrub produce, form dough into round shapes, measure and pour ingredients, peel oranges and boiled eggs, beat eggs, mash potatoes or fruit.

It is also very important to talk about food. Explaining why we make certain choices educates children and helps them make healthy choices. If you give the opportunity to ask questions and share ideas, children are more likely to retain the information. Ask them to taste something new, praise them when they do. Mix nutrition discussion in with all of your daily activities. During reading time, find books that promote healthy eating and the importance of good food choices. Keep the conversation going by talking about why certain foods were selected for a meal. By matching health benefits to individual foods, they will be learning how to create a balanced meal and healthy habits.

Lunch Munch
Fruit Salad
We Like Fruit
Washing Up
At the Farmers Market
Apples for Everyone
Tales for Very Picky Eaters
I'm Growing
Germs Make Me Sick
Munch! Crunch!
Vegetable Garden
Now I Eat My ABC's
The Get Well Soon Book
How Does Your Salad Grow
The Edible Pyramid
The Ugly Vegetables
Let's Get a Check Up
Miss Fox's Class Shapes Up
Happy to Be Healthy
Gregory, the Terrible Eater
Eat Your Peas, Louise!
I Will Never Not Eat a Tomato
Dinosaurs Alive and Well
I am Superkid
Good Enough to Eat
Keep Running Gingerbread Man

Children's Favorite Healthy Habits Bookshelf

"These eggs will keep your bones strong and give you energy for our nature walk later. Try some blueberries. They're good for your brain and will help make you smart!"

"Since we're already having fruit and yogurt, let's drink water with our snack instead of juice or milk. Plus, water is good for our skin and teeth!"