

## Positive Eating Habits

### Parents Decide:

- When** the child will eat
- What** the child will eat
- Where** the child will eat
- How much to serve** on the plate

### Kids Decide:

- How much the child will eat** of the serving on the plate

### Good Guidelines:

- No television during mealtime
- Food is not used as a reward or a bribe
- Meals are served on a predictable schedule each day
- One or two snacks per day; no grazing
  - Snacks are “mini-meals” and not treats or sweets
    - Sweet treats are not prohibited but rather are allowed for special days, not as a part of the daily routine
  - Snacks are not served at bedtime
    - The purpose of snacks is to provide energy to support activity; sleeping doesn’t take energy!
    - If your family insists on a late snack, make choices that contribute to good nutrition like air-popped popcorn, frozen yogurt instead of ice cream, baked tortilla chips instead of potato chips, graham crackers instead of cookies
- Portion food onto a small plate; no family-style bowls on the table
- For rapid eaters, split portions –
  - Serve salad or vegetables as an appetizer with water
  - Portion the remaining meal onto two plates; give one at a time; if still hungry after the second plate, the child may have extra salad or vegetables
  - Try to teach your child to pace eating more slowly. For example, put the fork down between bites, don’t put food in your mouth until the last mouthful is swallowed and enjoyed
- No “Clean Plate Club”
  - Child is not required to finish all the food on the plate! Remember, parent decides what to serve; child decides how much to eat
- No “short order cooks”!
  - If the child does not eat what is offered for the meal or snack, the next opportunity for food is at the next scheduled meal or snack. There is no option for a second food choice once the meal is served.

## More Positive Habits...

- ❑ Eliminate sweetened beverages from the home
  - Soda, lemonade, iced tea, juice drinks, sports drinks
  - 4-8 oz per day of 100% fruit juice is OK
  - Drink fat free milk with a maximum of 24-32 ounces per day
  - Water is preferred for thirst between meals
- ❑ Increase the number of meals prepared at home
  - When eating out, choose foods that will not sabotage your efforts at healthy eating, like grilled chicken or low-fat salad dressing
  - Avoid “super-sizes” – split a dinner if restaurant portions are large
- ❑ Get all the people involved in feeding your child on board with healthier eating
  - Both parents should have the same approach
  - Grandparents should understand that cookies and candy are not part of the child’s regular diet, and follow the plan too
  - Childcare workers must know what you want to serve your child and respect your wishes. Pack your child’s meals if necessary
- ❑ Fad diets don’t work in the long run and can be dangerous. Emphasizing one food group is especially risky for children who are still growing
- ❑ Get active! See our “Promoting Physical Activity” suggestions.