

Setting Up for Mealtime Success

- ***Provide comfortable seating with support.***
Have your child sit in a high chair, booster seat or child-sized chair. Add a stool or stacked books to make sure your child's feet are not dangling to promote physical stability and comfort.
- ***Provide a consistent space and tools.***
Use child-friendly cups, and smaller utensils and dishes. It may help to add a favourite character on a placemat to aid a secure, comfortable mealtime experience.
- ***Eating is a social activity.***
Have your child sit with you and/or others. Model rules such as "sit for mealtime" and model healthy eating habits.
- ***Eating is a sensory activity.***
Eating provides your child with lots of information about smell, taste, appearance (colour, shape), and touch. Allow your child to explore his food by smelling or touching it. Expect messiness.
- ***Limit snacking or "grazing".***
For most children, three meals and two small snacks/day are adequate. Offer water between times if your child makes a request (instead of juice or milk).
- ***Limit eating time to 30 minutes.***
Most children, even picky eaters, do most of the eating in the first 30 minutes.
- ***Limit distractions.***
It is best to turn off cellphones, computers and television during mealtime.
- ***Keep mealtimes enjoyable.***
If your child has finished eating, consider reading a book together or play with a toy to extend the time he/she spends in his/her seat. Provide positive memories of the mealtime to prepare for the next meal.