

SELF-PACED LESSON

After reading this lesson, click the survey link at the end to answer a few questions and receive nutrition education credit for your class.

## Family Meals for Raising an Adventurous Eater



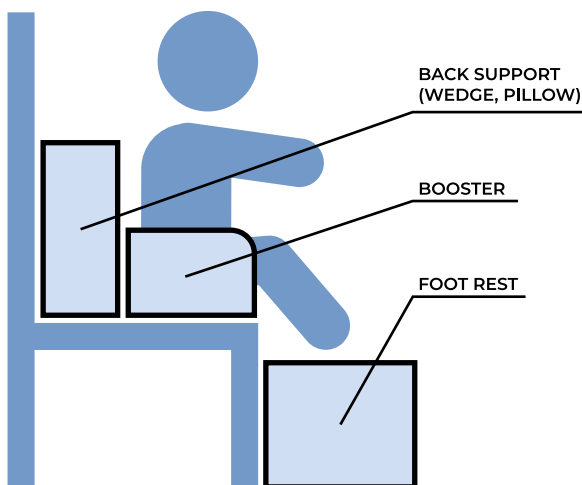
Looking for ways to help raise an adventurous eater? Look no further than your kitchen table!

Did you know that children who grow up eating meals with their family have improved self-esteem and increased success? Also, preschoolers who eat with their family have been shown to eat more vegetables, that's a WIN-WIN for everyone!

### So, what exactly does a “family meal” look like?

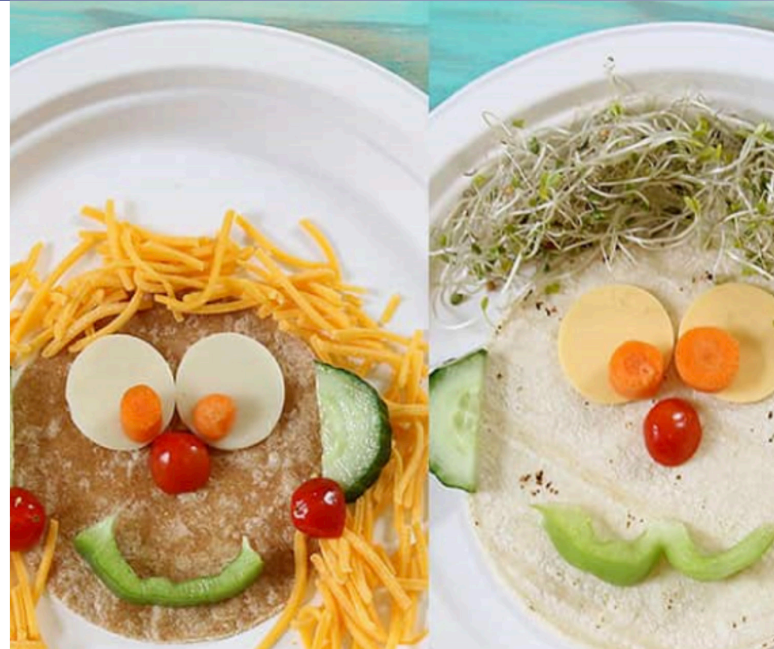


1. A family meal simply includes one child and one parent/caregiver. As the caregiver, you are the “teacher” providing the meal, the child is the “student” and the food is the “subject.”
2. Prepare a designated space for the meal. Kitchen tables are great, however, TV trays pushed together can work too!
3. Make sure the child has good chair support at the table. Providing good chair support decreases distraction at meals and allows the child to focus on eating rather than keeping themselves from falling out of their chair! The child’s hips, knees, and ankles should all be bent at a 90-degree angle in their chair with feet support! (See below for guidance)
4. Serve a variety of foods “family-style” at the table, allowing the child to choose which foods they want to put on their plate. Include at least one food on the table that the child likes, along with new or unfamiliar foods.
5. Eat with your child and allow for them to see YOU eat all different kinds of foods! Children are more likely to eat a food if their parent/caregiver is eating the same food.
6. Make foods fun! Allow the child to dip foods into different sauces, make shapes or faces with their food, etc. Kids learn best through play and eating is no exception.
7. Use non-judgmental language throughout the meal, not focusing on the child’s actions but rather making the food the focus. Point out the sensory aspects of each food (crunchy, salty, sticky, hot, cold, etc.) instead of focusing on which foods the child does not like.
8. Minimize distractions during meals! Distractions like TV and tablets during meals can negatively impact our hunger and fullness signals. Make the food and family interaction the focus of the meal instead.
9. Clean up in a fun way after the meal. Turn on a favorite song, use star-shaped sponges, or play I-Spy. Ask the child to throw or “blow” each food from the meal into the trash or reusable container to provide one more food exposure to the child.



### Other helpful tips for family meals to encourage adventurous eating:

1. If you can't eat with your child every day, eat together when you can.
2. Consider using a visual timer for 5 minutes to help your child prepare for the family meal if your child has a hard time coming to the table.
3. Offer your child regular meals and snacks every 2-3 hours throughout the day to reduce "grazing" between meals and increase appetite during meals. Offer your child a variety of food from all food groups (fruits, vegetables, meats/proteins, dairy, and whole grains) at meals and snacks and water in between.
4. If the table is used for many different activities besides meals, give your child their own placemat to use during meal times only. This helps provide a mealtime "cue" for the child.
5. Allow your child to be involved in the meal preparation (shaker jar with herbs, child-safe knives, mashing and mixing, etc.) to help increase their comfort with new foods.
6. Continue to offer your child a variety of foods at meals. Research shows that infants and toddlers may need as many as 15 food exposures before accepting a new food.
7. Don't forget to contact your local WIC Nutritionist or WIC clinic for additional ideas!



**Complete the questions below to receive credit for this lesson**

### Questions:

Circle the correct answer

1. Children who eat family meals together have been shown to have more self-esteem, more success in school, and eat more vegetables than children who don't eat together as a family.

True      False

2. At meals, place a large portion of all foods prepared onto the child's plate and pressure child to eat every food rather than allowing child to decide which foods he/she would like to place onto their plate and eat.

True      False

3. Which of the following tips will help your child become a more adventurous eater
  - A. Eat meals with your child as often as possible.
  - B. Minimize distractions during meals (TVs, Tablets, phones, etc.).
  - C. Provide child with good chair support during meals so child can focus on eating.
  - D. Serve foods “family-style” at meals, allowing the child to choose which foods they want to put onto their plate.
  - E. During meals, include at least one food on the table that the child likes, along with new or unfamiliar foods.
  - F. All of the above
4. You are planning to serve a food at dinner that your child refused to eat last time, what should you do this time to try to increase your child’s acceptance of the food?
  - A. Allow child to be involved in the preparation of the meal (shaker jar with herbs, child-safe knives, mashing and mixing, etc.) so that the child can become more familiar with the food before the meal.
  - B. During the meal, force child to try at least one bite of the food.
  - C. Place the food onto the child’s plate and allow child to eat the meal by themselves on the couch while watching TV.
5. Normally, Johnny throws a fit whenever carrots are on his plate at meals. However, last night at dinner Johnny made a food face with his cheese quesadilla and used some shredded carrots as the “hair” on his quesadilla face. Should you offer carrots to Johnny again since he usually does not eat carrots?
  - A. Yes, continue to offer carrots to Johnny at meals and snacks to give him as many foods exposures to carrots as possible.
  - B. No, never offer Johnny carrots again since he does not eat them.

### References:

Liu, X., Zhou, Q., Clarke, K. et al. Maternal feeding practices and toddlers’ fruit and vegetable consumption: results from the DIT-Coombe Hospital birth cohort in Ireland. *Nutr J* 20, 84 (2021). <https://doi.org/10.1186/s12937-021-00743-z>

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“Ages 0-2 Feeding Recommendations.” *HealthyEatingResearch.org*. <https://healthyeatingresearch.org/tips-for-families/ages-0-2-feeding-recommendations/#:-:text=It%20may%20take%20some%20children,offer%20the%20new%20food%20again>. Accessed 13 June 2024.

Key: 1. True, 2. False, 3. F, 4. A, 5. A

**Congratulations, you have finished!**

Have more questions? Contact your local WIC nutritionist!



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