

## Positive Mealtime Experiences



### Dear Families



Healthy eating plays a big role in making sure your child gets the nutrients they need for healthy development, but just eating the food sometimes isn't enough. During meals, children should engage in experiences that make it enjoyable for

them to eat healthier and try new foods. Creating a positive mealtime environment is key. Mealtimes can serve as opportunities to talk to each other about your day, model appropriate eating behaviors and even allow children to contribute to preparing meals. Children learn by watching and listening to others, so the conversations you have at the table can promote language, and modeling appropriate behaviors can support social development. Don't think of it as just a meal, think of it as an opportunity to create an experience your family won't want to miss!

### Engaging Children in the Kitchen

Including children in preparing meals is a great way to encourage them to try new foods and make mealtime an enjoyable one. Children of all ages can participate in helping to make meals.



**Two Year Old's**— rinsing fruits and vegetables, tearing lettuce or greens, snapping green beans, handing items to adults to put away, wiping off tables.

**Three Year Old's**— adding ingredients, stirring, scooping or mashing, naming and counting foods.

**Four Year Old's**— peeling fruits and vegetables, setting the table, measuring ingredients, mashing soft fruits, vegetables and beans.

**Five Year Old's**— measuring liquids, cutting soft fruits with a plastic knife, cracking eggs, reading recipes out loud.

### Creating Healthy Meals

Serving healthy foods to young children can be challenging. Try these quick tips of ways to serve healthy meals and sample dinner meals.

- Balance flavors in appealing ways.
- Include a foods from all food groups (fruits, vegetables, grains, dairy and protein).
- Create meals using foods with different colors and textures.

#### Sample Meals

- Grilled chicken, green beans, strawberries, whole-grain roll and milk.
- Baked turkey breast, carrots, quinoa, mixed fruit and milk.
- Teriyaki Salmon fillets, pineapples, mixed vegetables, whole-grain rice



### Mealtime, Not Screen Time

Mealtimes should include all of the family sitting together in a relaxing, engaging environment. Create this environment by turning off T.V.'s, phones, tablets and computers. It is important to create a positive experience without the distraction from screen time devices. You can practice limiting screen time not only during meals, but throughout the day.

Try these recommended practices to reduce the amount of screen time your child engages in.

- No screen time for children under 18 months.

