

Being a Healthy Role Model



Parents are the most important influence in children's lives. Just as children pick up positive habits - saying please and thank you - they can also pick up habits about eating.

Ask Yourself

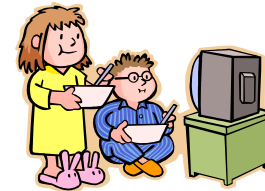
- Do you snack all day long?
- Do you eat in front of the TV?
- Do you eat whenever you are bored or under stress?
- Do you eat dessert at every meal?
- Do you skip breakfast?
- Do you have sodas rather than water, low calorie drink or milk with your meals?
- Do you diet all the time and have a fear of certain foods?



If you answered “yes” to more than a few of these questions, you are likely sending unhealthy messages to your child about food. Children won't perceive healthy eating as important if it is not something that they see you doing.

Tips for Parents

Actions speak louder than words. What you *DO* will make more of an impact than what you *SAY*.



Here are a few good habits to model for your children:

- Never skip meals – especially breakfast.
- Sit and eat your meals and snacks instead of on the run.
- Take smaller portions and try not to get second helpings (except for fruits and veggies of course).
- Try new foods – but don't force your children to try them. You may try saying, “try one bite and if you don't like it, you don't have to eat it.” Sometimes it takes 10 or more attempts, before they actually try it. Don't give up!
- Turn the TV off while eating.
- Limit junk food in the house but don't restrict it. Kids will find ways to eat more treats if they are restricted from eating them.
- Drink water, milk or small amounts of 100% juice (limit 8 oz. per day) instead of soda.
- Try new strategies for managing stress that do not include eating.
- Eat fruit for dessert.
- Don't make negative comments about your body shape. Kids pick up on those negative messages and become more critical of their own body shape.
- Don't DIET. Focus on lifestyle changes which include healthier eating (not deprivation) and being more active.
- Encourage family members to sit and eat together.
- Shop with your child and allow them to select their favorite fruits and vegetables.
- Include vegetables and fruits with meals and snacks.
- Serve food from the stove instead of putting it on the table. This reduces the temptation for seconds. You can also put the extras in the refrigerator before you start eating.

