

Family Mealtime

Talking at Mealtime

Regular family meals provide opportunities for good nutrition and spending time together as a family. Eating together allows children share their thoughts and feelings as well as improve their conversational skills.

While you are sitting around the table, you can talk and ask questions. A child who is using single words can build vocabulary by naming food items and utensils. Asking questions like "What color are your carrots?" or "What is on your plate?" can be simple ways to build vocabulary. Modeling phrases like, "Please pass the salad," "Excuse me," and "Thank you" can build your child's vocabulary too. Adults can also model conversation with each other or with older children to show that spending time talking as a family is fun.

Below is a list of websites to give you ideas about conversations you can have with your children during mealtime:

<http://thefamilydinnerproject.org/>

<http://thefamilydinnerbook.com/table-talk/>

<http://puttingfamilyfirst.org/family-connections/mealtime/>

Additional Family Time Activities

There are many additional ways to involve your child with mealtimes especially in terms of shopping for and preparing the meals. Below are some suggested activities:



- Write a grocery list with your child.
- Go grocery shopping with your child.
- Put the food away together with your child.
- Store healthy foods in a place your child can reach.
- Pick out a recipe with your child.
- Give child small jobs such as stirring, measuring and 'reading' the recipe.
- Have your child help serve the meal or dish the food onto plates.



Picky Eaters

Young children are especially hesitant to try new things. Below are a few things to keep in mind:

- Small portions equal big benefits. Give your child small sizes of foods you enjoy.
- Offer only one new food at a time and serve it along with something your child likes.
- Some children require foods to be separated to even try them. Other children, it's the opposite. Experiment to see what your child prefers.
- Trying new things takes time. It may take a dozen times seeing something before your child will try a bite!
- If all else fails, remember, your child will not starve himself!

