

SHARING THOUGHTS ABOUT EATING AND MEALTIMES

Dear Families:

Imagine your child eating a meal or snack in child care. What is he or she experiencing? Certainly your child is getting the foods he or she needs to be healthy and strong. Children also experience much more. Snacks and meals—and, for older children, related activities such as setting the table, cleaning up, and brushing their teeth after eating—give your child a chance to feel cared for and to develop personal care, communication, and social skills. Mealtimes also give children chances to begin practicing good nutrition and health habits.

Children's experiences and the attitudes they form now will affect their future eating habits. By modeling healthy practices and making eating a pleasurable and social time, we can lay the groundwork together for nutritious and enjoyable eating for the rest of their lives.

How We Can Work Together

- **Join us for a snack or meal whenever you can.** Your child will love having you with us. So will we! In addition, you will have a chance to see how we do things, and you may ask questions and make suggestions. Of course, if you are nursing your child, please come anytime. We have set up a comfortable place where you can feed your baby without interruption.
- **Let's communicate about changes in your child's diet or eating habits.** For example, please let us know when your pediatrician recommends adding new foods. After you introduce a new food at home, we'll introduce it here at the center. We can also work together when your child is ready to be weaned from the bottle.
- **Give us any information we need to keep your child healthy.** For example, let us know whether your child has allergies or a tendency to gag or choke. Keep us informed of any changes.
- **Please tell us what your child experiences during mealtimes at home.** What does your child eat and drink? What are your child's favorite foods? Do you have special family foods? What do you talk about? How does your child participate? This information will help us give your child a sense of continuity. It enables us to talk about family meals and serve some of the same foods.
- **Please ask us for menus and ideas for mealtimes.** Sometimes it's hard to come up with ideas for lunches. We'll be glad to give you some tips. We welcome your ideas as well.

Together, we can make mealtimes an enjoyable and valuable learning experience for your child.

Sincerely,

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