
A Letter to Families About Mealtimes

Dear Families,

One of the best things about a family child care home is that we enjoy breakfast, lunch, and snacks together in much the same way as your family does. Our meal- and snack times are special. The children help set the table, we sit and eat together, and the children help clean up afterward. You might be surprised to see a 2-year-old carefully pouring milk into a cup from a small pitcher. You might also see our preschool children passing bowls of food and serving themselves, or helping to clean up spilled milk. While we eat, we chat about what we've done during the day and whether we like a food that the children are trying for the first time. The children often help prepare the healthy meals and snacks we eat, and they are proud of this accomplishment.

Mealtimes and related activities, such as setting the table, washing hands, talking with others at the table, and brushing teeth, are all learning opportunities. Snacks and meals give your child a chance to feel cared for and to develop self-care, communication, and social skills. Mealtimes also give children chances to begin practicing good manners and healthy habits.

Here are some ways for us to work together:

- **Please tell me about mealtimes in your home.** What does your child eat and drink? What are your child's favorite foods? What foods does your child dislike? Do you have special family foods? What do you talk about? If I know this, I can talk about family meals and serve some of the same food. This will help your child feel connected with you during the day.
- **Join us for a snack or meal whenever you can.** Your child will love having you with us. So will I. In addition, you will have a chance to see how we do things, to ask questions, and to make suggestions. Of course, if you are nursing your child, please come at any time. I have 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 me know when your pediatrician recommends adding new foods for your baby. After you introduce a food at home, I'll introduce it here. We can also work together when your baby is weaned from the bottle. Let me know if your toddler's appetite is changing, or if your preschool or school-age child is refusing to eat a food he or she used to like.
- **Give me any information I need to keep your child healthy.** For example, let me know if your child has food allergies or a tendency to gag or choke. Please keep me informed of any changes.

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

Sincerely,

Copyright © 2009 by Teaching Strategies, Inc.

All rights reserved. No part of this text may be reproduced in any form or by any electronic or mechanical means, including information storage and retrieval systems, without prior written permission from Teaching Strategies, Inc., except in the case of brief quotations embodied in critical articles or reviews.

The publisher and the authors cannot be held responsible for injury, mishap, or damages incurred during the use of or because of the information in this book. The authors recommend appropriate and reasonable supervision at all times based on the age and capability of each child.