

FAMILY MEALS

The goal of Family Meals is for your Child to eat a volume of their preferred foods. However, a secondary goal is for your Child to be learning about other, non-preferred or new foods as well. Therefore, at EVERY meal AND snack, your Child should be offered at least one protein, one starch and one fruit/vegetable. At least one of these foods must be a preferred food. Do NOT restrict access to preferred foods until your therapist indicates that your Child has enough feeding skills for you to do so.

STEP 1 = give Child a verbal warning, “we will be eating in 5 minutes”.

STEP 2 = if instructed by your therapist, have your Child engage in a Postural Activation Exercise (see handout) or other Sensory Preparation exercise

STEP 3 = get your Child and say “it is time to WASH HANDS now” (not “it is time to eat”)

STEP 4 = bring Child to sink to wash hands (change the soap, washcloth or sponge and water temperature etc. every other day for Sensory Preparation)

STEP 5 = bring to the Table and have sit into chair (can have one preferred food already out on the table if needed to entice Child into their seat)

STEP 6 = begin Family Style serving (each person passes each food and takes a small amount to put on their plate or the “Learning Plate”; Rule of Thumb re: serving size = 1 tablespoon per year of age)

STEP 7 = everyone eats, allowing your Child to self-feed for at least the first 10 minutes of the meal. Adults are to talk about the food and use over-exaggerated oral-motor movements to “show and tell” the Child about how to make the food work in the mouth.

STEP 8 = after at least 10-20 minutes, begin any special feeding programs or adult feeding of your Child that has been recommended by your therapist.

STEP 9 = when Child appears to be done eating, offer a drink in a cup (can offer after the ½ way point in the meal if needs a drink sooner). Can try to re-offer a food after the drink, if Child appears to not have eaten enough at the meal. Do this in a playful manner; don’t push.

STEP 10 = when done eating and drinking, begin a “Clean Up” routine = Child blows or throws 1 piece of each food offered at that meal into the trash or a scraps bowl, then washes hands and/or table BEFORE getting down from the table.

If Child tries to get down too early, remind him/her “we haven’t done Clean Up yet. It’s not time to get down”, and then offer another food. Don’t forget to use your “Key Phrases”