

Strategies To Make Eating Successful

Use Structure

- Limit snack time to 15 minutes and any meal times to 20-30 minutes
- Try to follow the same schedule everyday
- Eat in the same place
- Use the same routine for each meal; this includes set up, clean up, etc.
- Put several foods on the table to expose your child to different foods
- Eat at least one pre-selected target food at each meal
- Food should be in small, chewable bites
- Do not have more than three foods on the plate at one time
- Quantity: 1 tablespoon per year of age
- Have a pre-chosen container to spit or vomit into

Create a Social Experience of eating together

- Involve your child in every part of the meal from preparation to clean up
- Do not punish, yell or criticize
- Your child should not be the focus
- Make the time enjoyable
- Serve food that is interesting
- Talk about the what the food looks like, etc. how it is prepared and any preferences
- Eat together as a family
- Be a model of good eating
- Really exaggerate your biting, chewing and swallowing
- Imitate your child's eating
- Everyone needs to stay at the table

Positive Reinforcement

Your Goal is to progress through the hierarchy without using any negatives, questions, demands, commands:

- Verbal praise works best
- Play with, touch the foods
- Reinforce good eating in other family members
- Rewards such as tokens, stickers can be used
- Reinforcers should be valued by the child

Key words and phrases for Positive Reinforcement during feeding

1. **Teach the basic rules and structures**
 - a. Use **Do this** instead of only using **Don't do this**: Food goes on our plate, not the....
We put food in our mouth, not...Food is for eating, not for...
2. **Make it a time for learning**
 - a. **Describe actions**: I can.... I am going to... When we ..., then it's easier to...
 - b. **Describe properties**: This is.... My food is....
3. **Use Encouragement**: You can..., We can... Daddy can...
4. **Try to keep the focus on the food and redirect as needed**:
 - a. **Name the food**: Here is your... Here is my... I have a...
 - b. **Describe actions**: Look, mommy is...
 - c. **Talk about location**: My food is...