

## Mindful Eating for Children

**MINDFUL EATING HELPS** children build a healthy relationship with food to support healthy growth and development. Being mindful means: being aware of yourself and your surroundings, eating when you



are hungry, stopping when you're full and acknowledging how you're feeling without judgment.

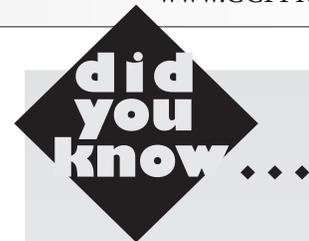
**A simple way to be more mindful when eating is to eat slowly, while using all your senses.** This is a good opportunity to teach children new words to describe sight, taste, smell and touch. "Is that food crunchy or soft? Does it taste sweet, salty, bitter or sour? Is it hot or cold?"

- Having children eat slowly can be challenging. Try turning it into a game. Introduce eating with chopsticks as a fun way to slow down eating and have children practice their motor skills. Have a jar of conversation starters, such as "if you could be any animal, what would you be and why?"
- Eating slowly will help children notice flavors they might have missed, and children will be able to better recognize when they are starting to feel full.

**It is important to give your full attention to the food, and know why you are eating.** The main reason we eat is because we are physically hungry, but there are other reasons why people might eat. Some people eat when they are "emotionally hungry" for example sad, stressed or lonely. When a child is seeking food just after eating, this may be a sign that the child is using food to deal with stress or other emotions.

- Listen to your child without judgment as they explore their feelings.
- Teach children to use food to satisfy the physical hunger. Remind children that eating can only solve the problem of hunger.

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- ▶ A recent study found that 60% of all children between the ages of 2 and 5 had eaten fast food at least once in the previous week.
- ▶ It takes approximately 20 minutes from the time you start eating for your brain to send out signals of fullness.
- ▶ Expiration date labels first became popular in the 1970s.
- ▶ Confusion over expiration dates leads 9 out of 10 Americans to throw away food needlessly.
- ▶ About 40% of food in the US gets thrown out—that's about 160 billion pounds of food each year.

Sources: UCLA Center for Food Policy Research, Natural Resources Defense Council, Harvard Food Law and Policy Clinic, Washington Post

### Quotable Quotes

“A good cook knows that it's not what is on the table that matters, it's who is in the chairs.”

– Leigh Standley

# Mindful Eating for Children

— Continued from front page

- Teach children to find non-food solutions to satisfy emotional hunger or manage feelings of stress, fear, loneliness or anger.

**Children can learn to eat when they are hungry and stop when they are full.** Children learn to tune into their body's hunger and fullness cues when they slow down and have the ability to control the amount of food they eat. Some children may have a hard time finding a comfortable level of fullness.

Ignoring or overwhelming a child's feeding cues can have long term consequences with regard to a child's nutritional status, food regulation and feelings about themselves and others.

- Allow infants to start and end feedings. Do not poke a bottle or spoon into a child's mouth. Hungry infants open their mouths to readily accept nourishment when they are hungry.
- Serve regular meals and snacks and share family meals as often as possible.
- Allow children to serve themselves (family style), and do not force children to eat all the food on their plates. Allow them to feed themselves when developmentally ready.
- Follow the division of responsibility in feeding children. It is a child's job to determine how much and even if they eat.
- Ask children to check in with their fullness **while** they are eating. It takes the stomach time to tell the brain that it is full.

**Minimize distractions.** Sometimes children will mindlessly eat when there are too many distractions (examples: TV, computers). Turn these off during mealtimes. Use mealtime as a time to have calm conversations, teach manners and be a positive, healthy role model.

**It is important for adults to acknowledge the child's responses to foods without judgment.** It can be frustrating for parents and childcare providers when a child likes only a few foods. Do not shame or make a child feel guilty



when he or she does not like a food. Remember that each person's experience with food is unique. A child might not like the food this time, but do not be afraid to continue to offer the food. It may take 10–15 or more exposures to a food before it is accepted... or not. There are no known negative nutritional implications of "picky eating" or "food jags," but food battles can spoil the nurturing experience of mealtime.

## To summarize the principles of mindful eating:

- Allow children to give full attention to the food, eat slowly and without distractions.
- Teach children to be aware of hunger and satiety and why they are eating.
- Acknowledge children's responses to food (likes, dislikes)

## Ways to connect children to food:

- Visit a grocery store, farmers market or produce stand with your children.
- Plant a garden with your children and allow them help water, weed and harvest.
- Let children choose between two healthy options. Do they want cauliflower or broccoli?
- Involve children in the kitchen and allow them to help prepare food. Examples: measuring, pouring, stirring, etc.
- Allow children to help you set up or clean up the table.
- Ask questions: Do you know how this food is grown? Where did it come from? How did it get here?

Mindful eating helps us become appreciative about where our food comes from and the people who have worked hard in getting it to our table. Showing gratitude for enjoying one of life's great pleasures—eating—feels good!

— Jenny L. Chu, M.S.  
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## KIDS' HEALTH & SAFETY

# Food Safety 101

**“SELL BY,” “BEST BY,” “USE BY.”** We have all seen these dates printed on our foods, but what do they actually mean? Here is what you need to know to keep your food safe and reduce food waste:

Expiration dates are only required to be on infant formulas. There is no federal laws that require expiration dates on any other food products. Thus there are no standard guidelines, legal definitions and no agency policing expiration dates. Some states, like New York, require expiration dates on all foods, but most states, including California, do not. This leads to a lot of variety in expiration dates and a lot of confusion.

“Expires on” dates are usually only found on infant formulas and some baby foods. You should always use these products before the expiration date.

“Sell by” dates are intended for the seller. This tells the seller when they should remove the product from their shelves. Sell by dates are usually found on perishables such as meat, seafood, poultry and milk. For “sell by” dates that go past at home, you can continue to store the food for a short amount of time depending on what it is. Some common products are: ground meat and poultry (1–2 days past the date), beef (3–5 days past the date), eggs (3–5 weeks past the date).

“Best by,” “use by,” “best if used by,” “best before” dates are intended for the consumer. This is based on product quality, not safety. These dates are usually found on shelf-stable products.



How long the food product is “good” after the expiration date depends on what it is and how it has been handled. Thus it is important to always follow good food safety practices and good old fashioned common sense: “When it doubt, toss it out.”

### Food Safety Practices

- Wash your hands before eating and before handling food.
- Keep food and everything that it touches clean.
- Store poultry, meat and seafood at least 40°F or colder.
- Keep foods out of the danger zone (41–140°F).
- Separate foods to avoid cross-contamination.
- Cook all foods to the proper internal temperature: fish (140°F), beef/lamb (145°F), pork/ground meat (160°F), poultry (170°F) and reheated foods (165°F).
- Do not use food that has an off odor, flavor or appearance.
- Do not use canned food if...
  - The can is dented at the double seam on the top or bottom, or has a severe dent on the side that pulls up the top or bottom of the can.
  - The can has rust on it.
  - The can is swollen.

## Sun-Dried Tomato Hummus

Garbanzo beans, drained... 16 oz can	Lemon juice..... 1 Tbsp
Sun-dried tomatoes ..... ¾ cup	Garlic, minced..... 2 cloves
Tahini..... 2 Tbsp	Salt and pepper..... to taste
Olive oil..... 1 Tbsp	Water..... (approximately) ½ cup

1. Place all ingredients in a food processor and mix until all ingredients are well combined and mixture is smooth. If the hummus is too thick, add water as needed. Taste and season accordingly.
2. Store in an air-tight container in the fridge for up to two days.

Yield: 3 servings

Meets requirement for fruit/vegetable or protein/meat alternate

— [www.thekitchn.com/weekend-snack-guest-post-from-115057](http://www.thekitchn.com/weekend-snack-guest-post-from-115057)

## Mango Lime Salsa

Mangos, ripe..... 2	Cilantro, chopped..... ¼ cup
Scallions, thinly sliced..... 1 bunch	Lime juice..... 2 Tbsp

1. The mango has a flat oval shaped seed in it. Hold mango vertically and cut from the top down on both sides just missing the seed. You will have two bowl shaped halves. Discard the seed. Score the meat of the mango in a criss-cross pattern on each half. Push up from the skin side turning the bowl inside out. Cut the cubes off of the skin.
2. Mix mango cubes with all other ingredients in a bowl. Let mixture sit about 10–20 minutes in refrigerator to mingle flavors. Serve with chicken, fish or on quesadillas or chili lime baked tortilla chips.

Yield: 4 servings

Meets requirement for fruit/vegetable

— *Feeding the Whole Family* by Cynthia Lair

## Chili Lime Baked Tortilla Chips

Lime juice..... ¼ cup	Sea salt..... to taste
Water..... ¼ cup	Corn tortillas, small..... 20
Chili powder..... to taste	

1. Preheat oven to 350°F. Arrange oven rack in the top and bottom of oven.
2. Stack tortillas in a pile and cut into 8 wedges each. Arrange wedges in single layer on parchment lined baking sheets.
3. Pour lime juice in a small spray bottle and fill with water. Mist tortillas with lime water and dust with chili powder and salt.
4. Bake for about 20 min., switching and rotating baking sheets half way through.

Yield: 20 servings

Meets requirement for grains/breads

— *Live Well Network*

## Activity Corner

### WHAT'S THE TIME, MR. WOLF?

This timeless game combines elements of tag and red light, green light.

One player is chosen to be Mr. Wolf and stands facing away from the other players at the opposite end of the play area. All players except Mr. Wolf chant in unison “What’s the time, Mr. Wolf?”



Mr. Wolf will answer in one of two ways:

- Mr. Wolf may call a time—usually an hour ending in “o’clock.” The other players take that many steps towards Mr. Wolf. (“Three o’clock” would equal three steps.) They then ask the question again.
- Mr. Wolf may answer “Lunch Time!”, and turn around and chase the other players back to their starting point.

If Mr. Wolf tags a player, that player becomes Mr. Wolf for the next round.

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**Food Q: What does a clock do when it's hungry?**  
**Funny A: It goes back four seconds.**