

Family Style Dining

Family style dining in a child care setting enriches learning as no other activity can. Pouring, passing, serving and sharing food not only promotes language and fine motor development but also enhances a child's self-esteem by providing opportunities to make decisions and

descriptive statements. This type of relaxed dialogue coupled with meal service participation goes a long way toward allowing self-help and social skills to grow.

Children are testing new skills, and how well they're doing is reflected back to them through their interactions with other children and their caregivers. That's why it's so important for caregivers to fully participate in the dining experience by eating with the children. When caregivers model good manners and the use of utensils, try all foods and encourage a pleasant conversation they create

a supportive, nurturing atmosphere where children can fully participate and succeed!

- Make meal times pleasant and relaxing. Set an attractive table, turn off the television, turn down loud music and plan for plenty of table time so that children are not rushed. The child who enjoys mealtime is often more willing to try new foods and is more likely to develop healthful eating habits.

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to take responsibility. The simple act of pouring a glass of milk can be deeply satisfying for young children.

Positive social interactions with peers and adults develops naturally around mealtime when children are encouraged to fully participate in the process. A warm easy give-and-take conversation style should be initiated by caregivers following children's leads. Interaction should be equal and involve a lot of



- ▶ The average child gets less than 15 minutes of vigorous activity a day.
- ▶ Thirty-six percent of school children have daily physical education; 36% have two or fewer days per week.
- ▶ In a typical physical education class, only 27% of actual physical education time is devoted to motor activity.
- ▶ Nine out of ten parents think their children are fit, when only one out of three is.
- ▶ Children exercise less as they get older, boys about 3% less each year; girls, 7.5% less.
- ▶ Research shows that boys are 32% and girls 56% more likely to experience bone fracture than children were 40 years ago.

Sources: www.fitnessforyouth.umich, Dairy Council of California

Quotable Quotes

“I think Pringles' initial intention was to make tennis balls. But on the day the rubber was supposed to show up, a big truckload of potatoes arrived instead.”

— Mitch Hedberg

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Family Style Dining

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- Energetic youngsters need small servings of food throughout the day. Provide nutritious meals and snacks to reinforce healthful eating habits. Introduce new foods gradually. Serve child-size portions to avoid overwhelming children with too much food on their plate but make seconds available if they're wanted. Let children make food choices from what is available so that they have some control over what is on their plate.



- Use meal times as learning times to practice conversation and social skills, to talk about nutrition and to reinforce basic concepts (colors of the food, shapes of the plates and napkins, etc.)
- Toddlers are focused on gaining independence, so expect lots of control issues over food. Often choosing what they would like to eat is a way of asserting themselves over something they can control. Try not to turn this new independence into a power struggle and help toddlers begin forging good eating habits for life. Do not force children to eat all of the food offered or to eat specific things. Understand that at times they may appear not to have eaten at all. That's OK. It's their choice.
- Toddlers are not readily able to discern personal space or respect other's property. This is the "Mine!" stage. For more peaceful mealtimes, children need to be well-spaced. The use of place mats gives visual cues to individual space.

- Learning opportunities are created when children are allowed to help in mealtime preparation and clean up. Allow children to help with simple "cooking"—pouring milk on cereal, spreading butter on bread, mixing chopped fruits for a fruit salad and setting and clearing the table. Tiny pitchers and child-size utensils and trays facilitate these experiences with a minimum of mess.
- Promoting self-help skills involves spills! There's just no way around it. Caregivers must be patient and willing to deal with messy situations. Begin mealtime with paper towels close at hand. Support and encourage children in their efforts to clean up after themselves.
- Using see-through pitchers and glasses at mealtime helps children develop logic and math skills. Spatial awareness comes with a visual picture of how much they've poured and allows children to recognize less and more.
- Relaxing and enjoying mealtime is often a challenge to caregivers, who may be feeling the bustle of a classroom, but it is vitally important! Organization can help. Have dishes, food, supplies, etc. close by. Have a quiet activity available for early finishers who wish to leave the table.
- The same skills children develop during free play and group time are utilized and practiced during mealtime. Sharing food at a cheerful table promotes child development as surely as any other activity of the day.
- Use appropriately sized tables and chairs so children can sit comfortably with their feet on the floor. Child-size dishes, serving pieces, flatware, pitchers and glasses encourage young children to serve themselves appropriate amounts.
- Serving trays and bussing trays allow young children to participate successfully in mealtime set-up and clean-up.

Patient caregivers who come to the table relaxed and prepared enhance opportunities for young children to learn independence, social skills and self-help skills during mealtimes while enjoying a healthy meal.

— Adapted from *Environments, Inc.*

KIDS' HEALTH & SAFETY

Calcium and Kids

Why is calcium so important to children?

Calcium is one of the key factors in building and maintaining strong bones. Children actually build the foundation for a lifetime of strong bones during their childhood, teen and young-adult years.

Many young people aren't getting enough calcium in the foods they eat and this can lead to more broken bones. Research shows that boys are 32 percent and girls 56 percent more likely to experience bone fracture than children were 40 years ago.

In addition to building strong bones, calcium also:

- Maintains a normal heartbeat
- Regulates blood pressure
- Helps the nervous system function properly
- May decrease the risk of developing colon cancer
- May play a role in weight management

And people with higher calcium intakes generally weigh less and have less body fat.

Helpful tips to get calcium everyday

- **Calcium rich foods:** milk, yogurt, cheeses, calcium fortified beverages, canned fish with bones, legumes, tofu, soybeans, greens, fortified cereals, corn tortillas, almonds, sesame seeds and figs
- **Start each day with a healthy breakfast.** Try a breakfast smoothie using frozen fruit, yogurt and milk. Eat calcium fortified cereal with milk.
- **Pack some calcium into snacks.** Fresh vegetable or fruit with yogurt based dips, string cheese, almonds.
- **Have a calcium-rich lunch or dinner:**
 - Top a baked potato with plain yogurt and shredded cheese
 - Serve pasta with a milk-based sauce and shredded Parmesan
 - Top salad with vegetables, beans and shredded cheese



- Make a taco with corn tortillas, beans and cheese
- Coat canned salmon cakes in chopped almonds
- Serve calcium rich side dishes: creamed spinach, braised kale, green vegetables with hummus, dark green leafy salads with chopped figs
- **Be a positive role model.** Make sure you are meeting your own calcium needs.

Kids need vitamin D too!

Along with calcium, vitamin D helps children develop strong bones. Many children are vitamin D deficient because they don't drink enough fortified milk, putting them at risk for bone fractures and rickets. Other dietary sources of Vitamin D include oily fish, egg yolks and vitamin D fortified juices and cereal.

Don't forget physical activity

Children need at least 60 minutes of physical activity every day, some of which is bone building.

- Bone building means activities that put the weight of the body on the bones.
- Walking, jumping rope, dancing, tennis, soccer, basketball are some activities your child might enjoy and they're good for the bones.
- To increase physical activity, limit inactive times such as watching TV and playing video games.

If a child won't drink milk or milk products because they have trouble digesting them:

- Try small amounts of milk, and have it with a meal
- Choose lactose free milk and milk products, which have the same amount of calcium as regular milk
- Try hard cheese or reduced fat yogurt as these products have lower amounts of lactose and may cause fewer symptoms
- Try soy milk with the same nutritional profile as milk

— Adapted from Dairy Council of California

Spicy Beef with Vegetables

Flank steak.....	1 pound	Asparagus, green beans or	
Light soy sauce.....	2 Tbsp	broccoli.....	1½ pounds
Hoisin sauce.....	3 Tbsp	Peanut oil.....	4 Tbsp
Sake or white wine.....	1 Tbsp	Garlic, minced.....	1 clove
Cornstarch.....	1 Tbsp	Fresh ginger, minced.....	2 tsp
Sugar.....	1 tsp	Red pepper	
		flakes (optional).....	⅛ tsp

1. Slice the steak into thin strips about 2 inches wide. Marinate meat in mixture of soy and hoisin sauces, wine, cornstarch and sugar for about 1 hour.
2. Blanch the vegetables until just barely crisp tender, about 5 minutes. Heat 2 Tbsp oil and stir fry the blanched vegetables for 2 minutes, then remove from pan.
3. Add 2 Tbsp oil to pan and stir fry garlic, ginger and pepper flakes for a minute, add the meat and marinade and cook for 3 minutes or until it is cooked on the outside and pink inside. Stir in the vegetables to reheat.

Yield 8 servings

Meets requirement for fruit/vegetable and protein/meat alternate

— *thechefproject.com*

Roasted Vegetables with Moroccan Spices

Olive oil.....	¼ cup
Garlic, minced.....	3 cloves
Paprika.....	2 tsp
Cumin.....	2 tsp
Salt.....	1 tsp

Any combination of vegetables: carrots, potatoes, sweet potatoes, parsnips, turnips, rutabagas, butternut squash or beets to make about 6 cups.

1. Preheat oven to 425°F. Place oil, garlic, paprika, cumin and salt in a food processor or blender and pulse or blend until smooth.
2. Peel and cut all vegetables in 2 inch pieces and place in a roasting pan large enough to accommodate the pieces in a single layer. Toss with the spiced oil mixture until well combined.
3. Roast the vegetables, stirring once or twice, until caramelized and tender, 45 to 50 minutes.

Yield: 12 servings

Meets requirement for fruit/vegetable

— *Eating Well*

Food Q: Why shouldn't you tell a joke to an egg?
Funny A: It might crack up!

Activity Corner



VALENTINE SNACK ART

Try this fun snack activity instead of sweet treats at your Valentine's Party.

Bread Stick Valentines

Open a can of refrigerated bread stick dough and let the kids shape their dough into a heart, their initial, a flower or other design. Blend an egg with 1 Tbsp water and brush on their creations. Sprinkle with red or pink colored sugar crystals and bake as directed.

Strawberry Milk Slush

Blend together lowfat milk with frozen strawberries and serve it with the valentine bread sticks for a yummy Valentine's Day snack.

Extend the activity by talking about the heart and its health. Your heart loves activity. Have the children feel their heart beat at rest. Then get the kids up and jumping. Have them feel their heart beating strong, fast and happily.

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