



Nutrition and Physical Activity Self-Assessment for Child Care







FEEDING PRACTICES

Here's Why...

Young children are notoriously picky eaters and can challenge the best of adults with their ability to love a food one minute and hate it the next. While frustrating, forcing children to try a food or to clean their plates can lead to negative associations with food, overeating and weight problems. Therefore, gently encourage children to try a new food, but don't force. As a best practice, offer kids healthy foods and snacks and then let them decide if and how much they want to eat. It often takes ten or more introductions to a new food before a child will try it. Be patient! Make snack and mealtime stress free and fun!

Offering food as a reward or punishment places undue emphasis on foods as "good" or "bad," so offer all children the same foods, regardless of good or bad behavior.

Choices You Make for Your Facility

-  Encourage children to eat a variety of foods, but don't force them to try foods if they resist.
-  Offer the same foods to all children, regardless of behavior. Use stickers or other non-food rewards to encourage good behavior like picking up toys.
-  Children vary in the amount of time needed to finish eating a meal. Extra time may be needed for slow eaters.
-  Control waste by encouraging small portion sizes and allowing children to take seconds of requested food items.
-  Teach children to listen to their bodies. Ask them if they are still hungry when they request more food and ask them if their belly feels full before removing their plate.
-  Introduce new foods one at a time with other, more familiar items.

Checklist

- Staff ask children if they feel full when they eat very little of a meal or snack.
- Staff ask children if they are still hungry before giving second helpings.
- Children are encouraged by staff to try a less favorite food in a gentle and positive manner.
- Food is not taken away for bad behavior and not given as a reward for good behavior.



Getting Support From the Parents

- 🍓 Encourage parents to visit the facility during mealtime to observe the center's approach to serving food.
- 🍓 Provide parents with the center's nutrition plan, which outlines your policies for mealtime and serving foods.
- 🍓 Show parents that their child has learned to listen to his or her body to decide if he or she is hungry or full and have parent encourage this at home.



Getting the Kids on Board

- 🍓 Create alternatives other than food for rewarding good behavior. Give them more time outside to play instead!
- 🍓 Let the children help out during mealtime. They can set the table and clean up.
- 🍓 Make mealtime a fun time by talking with the children.
- 🍓 Experiment with new foods that will be offered, such as asparagus. Talk about how they grow, their color, shape, texture, etc. This will allow for the food to become familiar.
- 🍓 Teach children in a fun way what it means to listen to their body.

For more information, please visit:

http://www.nfsmi.org/Information/Newsletters/Mealtime_memo_index.html

<http://betterkidcare.psu.edu/TIPS/TIPS07.pdf>

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