

Strategies for Feeding Children



During mealtime it's best for parents and caregivers to trust children to determine whether to and how much to eat from what is offered. Children have a natural ability to eat as much as they need and grow in the way that is right for them. When parents and caregivers follow the Division of Responsibility in Feeding, children build on this natural ability.

These guidelines apply at every stage in your child's growing-up years, from infancy through the early years through adolescence.

Infants

- The caregiver is responsible for what is offered (breast milk or formula).
- The infant is responsible for how much they eat from what is offered (and everything else).

Babies transitioning to solid food

- The caregiver is responsible for what, when and where the food is offered.
- The child is responsible for whether to and how much to eat the foods offered by the caregiver.

Toddlers, children and adolescents

- The caregiver is responsible for what, when, and where the food is offered.
- The child is responsible for whether to and how much to eat from what is offered.

Parents' and caregivers' feeding jobs

- Choose and prepare the food.
- Provide regular meals and snacks.
- Make eating times pleasant.
- Step-by-step, show children by example how to behave at family mealtime.
- Be considerate of children's lack of food experience without catering to likes and dislikes.
- Limit food or beverages (except for water) between meal and snack times.
- Choose a time when everyone can enjoy at least one meal together—it may be breakfast, lunch, or dinner.

Children will:

- Eat the amount they need.
- Learn to eat the food their parents and caregivers eat.
- Grow predictably.
- Learn to behave well at mealtime.

Adapted from Ellyn Satter's *Division of Responsibility in Feeding* at EllynSatterInstitute.org/how-to-feed/

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