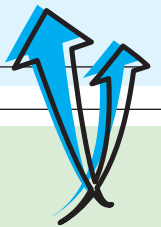


# Food-related Attitudes and Practices to Adopt with Children

Healthy eating is about more than just eating nutritious foods. It also involves developing a healthy relationship with food starting at a young age. The practices, attitudes and words of adults have an influence on the short- and long-term relationships children have to food. As someone who works with children, you must pay attention to the example you set through your words and your actions.




Our bodies send us signals of hunger and satiety to tell us that we are hungry or have had enough to eat. We must pay attention to these signals to know when it is time to eat or stop eating.



Practices to avoid	Reasons	Practices to adopt
<p><b>Making children or insisting that they eat or taste something</b></p> <p>“Just 2 - 3 more bites.”</p> <p>“Eat at least half of the food on your plate.”</p> <p>“Eat your vegetables before you go play.”</p>	<p>Disconnects them from their hunger and satiety signals in addition to making them more likely to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ associate food with negative experiences</li> <li>▶ create aversions to certain foods</li> </ul>	<p>Encourage them to listen to their hunger and satiety signals</p> <p>Children need to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ know how to recognize these signals</li> <li>▶ eat slowly</li> <li>▶ chew well</li> <li>▶ avoid distractions (television, games)</li> </ul> <p>Trust the children!</p>
<p><b>Playing with children’s emotions to get them to eat</b></p> <p>“There are kids in this world who are starving to death and you can’t even finish your lunch.”</p> <p>“Eat it all, just for me, please.”</p> <p>“Have a cookie, it’ll make you feel better.”</p> <p>“Good job, you ate everything!”</p> <p>“This food will make you grow big and strong.”</p>	<p>Disconnects them from their hunger and satiety signals in addition to sending inconsistent messages:</p> <p>Children need to understand that we shouldn’t waste food, but not this way.</p> <p>Making someone else happy is not a good motivation to eat.</p> <p>Sweet foods are not a way to console a child.</p> <p>The goal of a meal is not to eat everything.</p> <p>Foods do not have superpowers.</p>	<p>Encourage children to guide their parents with amounts.</p> <p>Encourage children to eat because they are hungry.</p> <p>Console a child with hugs instead of food.</p> <p>Praise children for tasting something.</p> <p>Send them the message that it is important to eat a varied diet and listen to our hunger to grow and be healthy.</p>

Every food can provide a variety of nutrients, experiences and enjoyment for children.

It is true that parents are largely responsible for their children’s diet. However, as an educator, you can influence children and their parents by using these practices.

Avoid	Reasons	Practices to adopt
<p><b>Restricting or forbidding foods</b>            “Cake is not good for you. you’d better take it back home.”            “If you don’t eat your food, you can’t have dessert!”</p>	<p>In addition to reducing variety:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ Makes the forbidden foods more attractive</li> <li>▶ Makes children overeat</li> </ul>	<p>Talk about food in positive terms            There are no good or bad foods. Rather, there are foods that we should eat every day, like the ones listed in Canada’s Food Guide, because they are more nutritious, and other foods we eat on occasion, because they are less nutritious.</p>
<p><b>Making a link between food and weight</b>            “Bread makes you gain weight.”            “For you, one serving is enough.”</p> 	<p>Makes children worry about their weight and:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ Creates an unhealthy association between food and weight</li> <li>▶ Creates stigmas</li> </ul>	<p>Talk about food in terms of fuel that gives your body what it needs to function properly.            The portions being served should never be based on children’s weight. All children are allowed to have the same food, including dessert.</p>

Be careful not to let your actions and words cause children to worry about their appearance. Even if your conversation is with another adult, children listen and will question themselves. Some children begin to worry about their weight at age four.

Intimidation in schools very often targets children’s weight. Teach children that comments about weight and appearance can hurt other children and are not allowed. Praise children for their internal qualities, their talents or their accomplishments.

It may seem subtle, but the way we praise children makes a huge difference in their well-being.