Happy Mealtimes for Healthy Kids

Helping children create a lifetime of healthy eating habits.
Happy Mealtimes for Healthy Kids

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Happy Mealtimes for Healthy Kids was created to make mealtimes successful for both caregivers and children. This is a self-paced training designed to meet the needs of children and caregivers throughout mealtimes. The information presented is up-to-date, well-researched, and tested. Furthermore, it is considered the best practice in childcare across the country.

While the information in this module does not focus on the essentials of planning healthy meals, always remember to follow the Child and Adult Care Food Program guidelines for providing healthy meals for young children. Upon completion of this training, you should gain valuable information you can apply on a daily basis.

The goal is to help children eat well and create a lifetime of healthy eating habits. Since most childcare programs follow regulations from more than one outside organization, start with best practice for the children you serve, and then follow the standards for each of those organizations. Requirements for the Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP), Head Start Performance Standards, local licensing regulations, and new research on best practice for feeding children all fit nicely together to make childcare programs successful.
Objectives:

- Schedule regular meals and snacks
- Create a routine for each meal that accommodates both the needs of the children and teacher
- Create a transition activity to and from each meal
- Create a pleasant mealtime environment

Caregivers are responsible for creating a pleasant mealtime environment for children, which consists of a warm, welcoming environment that caters to both eating and child interaction. A pleasant environment has routine mealtimes, transitioning activities, limited distractions, and caregivers applying direct attention to children. Making mealtime pleasant is a great way to enjoy the meal and help children eat well.

Careful planning will allow you to offer meals to children in a relaxed setting. Assess your current mealtimes by filling out Worksheet #1 found on page 22. It is expected that you might not be able to complete each practice on the assessment until after you’ve finished this module.

Children have very small stomachs, yet very large energy needs. They’ll need to eat smaller amounts and more frequently than adults, every two or three hours throughout the day. If a child becomes overly hungry they can become irritable, have difficulty focusing on tasks, and may act out in a variety of ways. Some children who are not fed on a regular schedule may display behavior problems if they miss a meal or snack, or if their meals are served later than usual.

Always look at the needs of children and the hours of operation when creating a meal schedule, and keep in mind several things:

- Schedule 2 hours between a meal and a snack.
- Snacks should last at least 30 minutes.
- Lunch and Breakfast should last at least 45 minutes.

**Example:**

Breakfast at 6:30am–8:30am
Lunch 11:30–12:30am
Afternoon Snack at 3:00pm–4:00pm.
Infants should be fed “on demand”, which means whenever they show signs of being hungry. Even from birth, infants are very good at knowing when they are hungry and when they are full. When they are hungry, they will try to suck on anything nearby; when they are full, they close their lips and stop sucking.

When children are one-years-old, they can begin eating at scheduled mealtimes. However, it may take a little practice to learn how much they need to last them until the next meal.

By the time the child is two, they can usually wait a little longer. When a two-year-old tells you they are hungry, tell them you’re making a snack and it will be ready in a few minutes. They will be content for the time being.

Offering meals and snacks at regular times assures that children do not have to wait too long to eat while allowing us to plan accordingly. When meals and snacks are not offered regularly, the child will begin “grazing”. Grazing creates a problem in childcare settings, as the child loses interest in regular meal and snack times. Furthermore, grazing can lead to unhealthy choices, such as chips, candies, and desserts that will become a problem for timely, healthy meals and snacks.

When a child enrolls in your facility, discuss the meal and snack times with the parent so they understand the importance of scheduled meals, and can continue it at home. Give the parent an approximate schedule they can follow, and always allow them to ask questions or give suggestions. The goal is to gain support so that the children have a clear understanding of healthier, scheduled meals as they grow.

After creating a mealtime schedule, design and implement a mealtime routine. Be sure to include:

- a transition activity for entering and exiting each meal
- hand washing
- setting the table
- food distribution
- any other tradition currently in place

When creating a routine, keep in mind that there may be interruptions. For example, a visitor coming to read to the children during lunch may be late. What would you do? With a backup plan, you will be able to maintain control of the situation until lunch is served. When a backup plan is not considered, children can become restless and temperamental. Stability is needed for these unexpected events. Refer to Worksheet #2 on page 23 for a sample of a mealtime routine.
Keep in mind that routines are not easily implemented in a single day. Some children take three days to three weeks to adjust to any form of change. The key to success is consistently following the same routine each day, and being flexible to unpredictable changes.

Incorporate a transition activity between playtime and mealtime to help it go smoothly. Transition activities are small activities between two major activities that help bridge the activities together, and assist in making the routines run smoothly. It could be a song, a saying, or a game to end an activity and start mealtime activities.

**Example:** Tell the children, “We will have lunch in a few minutes, but first we are going to wash our hands, and then we will sit down at the table.”

Children tend to respond better when they know and understand what will happen next. This is also a good time to remind them of what they can expect, and what you expect, during the meal. When they understand what will happen, and how they are expected to behave, they will feel more comfortable and can relax.
When implementing a transition activity there are several things you should do:

- Alert children when a change is about to take place
- Set clear expectations and enforce them
- Give simple directions
- Use a buddy system
- Model desired behaviors
- Use developmentally appropriate transitions

Making mealtimes pleasant is a great way for everyone to enjoy eating, and will allow you to offer meals in a relaxed setting.

If possible, try separating meals from restrooms, major walk areas, and any other physical distractions. All background noise should be eliminated, tables should be free of clutter, and all food and beverages should be placed on the table at the same time. Refrain from adult conversations that are not directly related to mealtime as they can be a direct distraction and affect the meals in a negative manner.

Another aspect of making mealtimes pleasant is the type of conversations we encourage. Conversations should be child-directed, focusing on the child’s interests and experiences.

Since all of your conversations at mealtime will not be about food, you might want to draw the children’s attention to the food to encourage them to try something new, and to help them focus on eating. Mealtime conversations around food may include what foods are being offered, the colors of each food offered, how they are prepared, if the children eat similar foods at home, the origins of the food, or a variety of other related topics.

Conversations should not focus on which foods or how much a child eats.

When the meal is about to end, ask the children if they have had enough to eat, and remind them when the next meal or snack will be offered. Never rush a child through their meal, as each child eats at a different pace. Careful planning and experience will let you know how much time every child needs to finish eating in a relaxed setting.
Creating a Pleasant Environment

Children and caregivers benefit from having a routine in place. Routines are designed to be predictable, but also flexible. The key to a successful routine is a transition from each activity. Transitions bridge activities and assist in making routines run smoothly. Once you have a set schedule with regular meal and snack times, planned transition activities, and prepared healthy meals and snacks, you have created a pleasant mealtime environment for children.

1. Why do children need a pleasant environment during mealtimes?
   The environment has a major effect on eating habits. Typically, the better the environment, the better children will eat.

2. What are two things to eliminate distractions during mealtimes?
   Eliminate background noise and remove clutter from the table.

3. What is a transition activity?
   An activity that bridges routine activities

4. What are two transition activities?
   Song or hand movement
Chapter 2

The Picky Eater

Objectives:
- Implement different tips and strategies for encouraging picky eaters to broaden their choices

Mealtimes are an exciting time to share food and conversation, but unfortunately, we find ourselves spending that time worrying more about what the children ate, cleaning up, and settling arguments than how to handle picky eaters.

Picky eating is a common behavior all children experience between 2 to 5 years of age. They are cautious about trying new things, which can make mealtime a challenge. While some enjoy tasting new foods, others may be particular. It’s not uncommon for a child to get upset and refuse to eat.

Example: A child was served broccoli at daycare, yet has never seen broccoli before. When he refused to eat it, he was told about the one-bite rule: no matter how long it may take, he was to sit at the table until he took one bite.

Some children are picky eaters based on location. If a child eats fish at daycare, they may prefer something else at home. And if the child eats the same thing every meal, they may be experiencing food jag. Food jag occurs when a child has grown tired of the same food.

As we grew up, the adults around us forced us to eat foods we didn’t want because they believed it would be beneficial. Unfortunately, this has shown to have an adverse effect. When children are forced to eat something they don’t want, they grow to dislike it. It’s now recommended that to encourage children to try new foods, you should find a way to make it fun and exciting.

Reflect back on your childhood and recall a food experience that had happened to you.
Can you figure out what happened?
What do you do when you have a picky eater?

1. **Don’t Force Children to Eat during Mealtimes** – Allow a child to choose how much food they would like to eat by giving them the opportunity to decide for themselves. The goal is to introduce the food by allowing them to make their own decision. Some foods will have to be introduced several times before they’ve develop the acquired taste for it.

2. **Avoid Bribery** – Never resort to bribery. Bribery provides compensation in return for completing an act. It is a short-term remedy that positions children for problems in the future. Life is not built on short-term goals, and the initial problem will then escalate into larger problems. Children may begin to barter treats for other foods. In the long-term effect, children will associate receiving items in exchange for things they don’t like.

3. **Allow Children to Role Model** – Children tend to model after each other, and mealtimes are the perfect opportunity for them to do it. Sitting less picky eaters next to the picky ones will motivate them to try different foods.

4. **Explore Food** – Allow children to explore their food. Let them touch, feel, submerge, or mix it all together. It may look like they’re playing, but it’s a rewarding process. Let them have full control of their meal whenever possible. Though even if a child is given the right to explore, always remember common table etiquette. Set small, developmentally appropriate rules and model the correct behavior for them.

5. **Be Persistent** – Follow the same routine each day. Set all the food on the table at the same time, and ask each child to try the foods they’ve refused to eat previously. The key is to be persistent and patient. Avoid anger and frustration, as children tend to model the behaviors around them.

6. **Introduce Food with Activity** – Children are explorers. They love to learn and explore everything around them. Introduce new foods by finding books that pertain to it, or prepare activities where they’ll have a chance to taste it.
Implementing Strategies for Picky Eating

The direct approach of coaxing a child to eat new foods removes their control, and sometimes they’ll need to try it 10 to 15 times before developing the acquired taste. Always remember to incorporate a new food and its nutrition into your daily activities one at a time. The more a new food is introduced, the higher the chances are that the children will want to try it. By introducing new foods one at a time with the help of their favorite foods, children will be able to develop at their own pace.

There are a variety of simple ways to increase exposure to new foods that go beyond food tasting. Some of the activities involve stories such as *The Very Hungry Caterpillar*, *The Three Bears*, or *Oliver’s Vegetable Garden*.

A child can even learn about nutrition by roleplaying restaurant or chef. Allowing them to help with the final steps of cooking is called a food assembly activity. If all of the ingredients are prepared, it is simple for them to make individual salads, or their own tacos.

Nutrition can also be taught through art projects, gardening, reading, and math. Activities based on culture or geography teaches about the origin of different foods in a fun and exciting way.
Picky eating is not a negative behavior, but sometimes a child will need assistance to modify their eating habits into healthier ones. A child wants to be independent, so they may often say no to foods you know they love and desire because they’re trying to entertain their friends by behaving differently. Be persistent, because the child may need to try a new food 10 to 15 times before developing a taste for it. And remember, never force or bribe them.

1. **What age do children peak at being picky eaters?**
   2

2. **Why shouldn’t you force children to eat during mealtimes?**
   Forcing children to eat can create short and long term problems. Children can develop a sense of resentment towards the forced food.

3. **How should you introduce new foods?**
   Through activities

4. **What is an example of bribery?**
   I will give you a cookie if you eat your brussels sprouts.

5. **What can you do to assist picky eaters?**
   Avoid forcing children to eat, avoid bribery, allow children to explore food, and persistence
Chapter 3
Managing Food Allergies

Objectives:
 Create a Food Allergy Policy for childcare facilities
 Implement a Food Allergy Policy for children with food allergies
 Implement basic tips for meeting the needs of children with food allergies

Approximately 8% of children have food allergies and are diagnosed between the ages of 1–4 years. Food allergies are abnormal responses from the body’s immune system to food. It thinks the protein is harmful, and attempts to protect the body by triggering the abnormal response in people who have a food allergy. An allergic reaction can happen within seconds or a few hours of eating, and if precautions are not made, some reactions can be life threatening.

Typical food allergens are:
1. Milk
2. Eggs
3. Peanuts
4. Tree nuts
5. Fish
6. Shellfish
7. Soybeans
8. Wheat

Key symptoms include:
1. Itching in the mouth and throat
2. Skin rashes or eczema
3. Swelling of tongue or throat
4. Difficulty breathing
5. Cramps, nausea, diarrhea, and/or vomiting
6. Decline in blood pressure
7. Loss of consciousness

Yes or No: Do children who are lactose intolerant have food allergies?

No, children who are lactose intolerant do not have food allergies, but they do have food intolerance.

Food intolerance is a food-induced reaction that doesn’t involve the body’s immune system, and it’s usually not life threatening. Children who are lactose intolerant do not have the enzymes needed to digest the sugar in milk, which can cause a food induced reaction.
There are four major types of food intolerances:
- Dairy
- Gluten
- Yeast
- Fructose

Typical symptoms include:
- Gas
- Bloating
- Abdominal pain

Creating a Food Allergy Policy for your daycare facility is beneficial to everyone, and should clearly define the course of action required to meet the needs of children with food allergies, also known as a “treatment procedure”. Seek out medical specialists and anyone familiar with food allergies to help provide insight on how to manage them.

This policy needs to include the state and federal disability laws and the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) regulations regarding children with food allergies. Food allergies that are life-threatening are considered to be a disability. With regards to this, know and understand all applicable federal laws and state laws.

The policy should also include responsibilities and expectations for every caregiver in your daycare along with their signature, and is important to have hanging in a visible location where parents can see. Then have the parent sign a copy, and keep it in that child’s file.

When creating the Food Allergy Policy, remember that although any food could potentially lead to anaphylaxis, the most common foods are peanuts, tree nuts, and shellfish. If your daycare has a large number of children with food allergies, it is best not to allow outside foods from families and employees, unless it is provided for children with special diet requirements.

**Anaphylaxis** is a rapidly occurring reaction that may involve hives, swelling, and enlargement of the larynx (voice box) with choking, wheezing, severe vomiting, diarrhea, and shock. This is a life-threatening reaction that can occur in minutes, hours, or days after exposure to the food allergen.
It is of utmost importance that we know how to keep children safe from food allergies. When a parent reports to have a child with a food allergy and requests a special diet, keep in mind the steps to ensure mealtimes remain safe:

1. **Implement the Food Allergy Policy** – Discuss the Food Allergy Policy with the parents, and the accommodations you can reasonably make for their child. Get a signed medical statement from that child’s physician that clearly describes the food allergy, food restrictions, substitutions, instructions, and medications. Request that the parent provide you with the prescribed medication, along with directions to administer it.

2. **Review the child’s allergies** – It is important that anyone working with children know and understand food allergy symptoms. Every medical statement and parent-signed Food Allergy Policy should be stored in each child’s file.

   Have a list of every child who has food allergies placed in each classroom and kitchen, and keep it updated as changes occur. This list should be easy to read and understand, include the child’s name, allergy, symptoms, and treatment, and covered with a coversheet to protect their privacy. See the Sample Childcare Allergy List on page 25 for assistance.

3. **Learn how to create safe meals and environments for children with food allergies** – This should include training every caregiver in your daycare on:
   - How to properly read food labels
   - Who is allowed to administer medication
   - How to administer the medication, also known as a “treatment procedure”
   - Who to contact should an emergency arise
   - Safe activity planning
   - and How to create a safe environment.

Practice these food allergy “fire drills” to help prepare for an allergic reaction, and a designate place to store all the medication.
Learning how to properly read food labels helps locate possible food allergens. Not every manufacturer includes warning statements on their labels about possible cross-contamination because labeling laws do not require them to list the common allergenic ingredients. Unfortunately, this can result in shared equipment and cross-contamination, so the caregiver needs to read every label carefully to ensure that each food is safe for the child’s unique allergy. If you are still unsure, call the manufacturer.

It takes a “policy team” of the parents, caregivers, cooks, and the child’s physician to successfully manage food allergies, and maintain the best care for children. Exercise caution to prevent exposure to food allergens. Have children wash their hands for at least 20 seconds, clean and sanitize all food contact surfaces with bleach and water, and avoid extracurricular activities that use food a child is allergic to.

When you have children in your class with special diets you should:

- Have a positive attitude.
- Implement the Food Allergy Policy.
- Have a “teacher/parent” conference with the parents of the child who has a food allergy.
- Request all paperwork, including Medical Statements and any other required documentation.
- Know who is allowed to administer medications, and discuss this with the parents.
- Place a list of the children with food allergies in designated areas, including the kitchen and classroom.
- Wash your hands with soap and warm water before and after each task (using just water or hand sanitizer is ineffective for removing food allergens).
Managing Food Allergies

Serving children with food allergies can be easy through proper planning. When working with children who have food allergies, remember to be positive and respectful. Learn the policy, implement it, and make the children feel comfortable and safe while doing so.

1. What is a key step in creating a Food Allergy Policy?
   Forming a “policy team”, incorporating state and federal regulations, and creating a treatment procedure.

2. What are two tips for having a successful meal with a food allergy?
   Learn the food allergy requirements and have a positive attitude.

3. Where are two major places a food allergy list should be posted?
   Posted in each classroom and in the kitchen.

4. What is an allergy list?
   A list of all the allergies a child may have based on an allergen.
Objectives:
- Understand the advantages for teachers of family style dining
- Understand the process of purchasing items to implement family style dining
- Implement an ideal mealtime using family style dining

Adults are responsible for planning and preparing healthy meals and snacks for children, while children are responsible for deciding which of the foods offered they want to eat and how much. The goal is not to just feed children, but meet the child’s nutritional needs while creating positive eating habits that last a lifetime.

Family style dining is when food is offered in bowls and platters on the table, with drinks made available in pitchers. It is an ideal method of serving food to children, as it implements several different skills that follow them for life.

**Family style dining reinforces social skills, such as:**
- Taking turns talking
- Passing food in serving dishes
- Using please and thank you
- and it teaches them to set the table for their friends

Furthermore, it helps children feel in control of their eating by allowing them to take small portions first, and then additional portions later. A child may even refuse a specific food in the beginning, only to decide to eat it at the end of the meal. This method encourages children to feel confident enough that food and drinks will always be made available throughout the meal.

However, if you plan to serve through family style dining, you must stick with it. Returning to a previous serving style the next day will result in disaster. To ensure success each time, review the Family Style Mealtime Checklist Worksheet found on page 24. This checklist states every expectation throughout mealtimes, and is a good reference to fall back on.

Everyone benefits from family style dining. Since all the food and drinks are made available at the beginning of the meal, the caregiver can enjoy a more relaxed meal with the children since they won’t have to return to the kitchen. When a caregiver is seated with the children, it allows them to act as role models by demonstrating appropriate behavior, and they can redirect wrong behavior through direct supervision, thus helping to maintain a pleasant atmosphere throughout the meal.
To successfully implement family style dining, several items are needed. It’s recommended that you don’t use your standard kitchen wares, as they generally aren’t child-friendly.

Be safe by purchasing these items made specifically for kids:
- Plastic wide lip bowls and platters
- Short handled hard plastic serving spoons
- Cups
- Pitchers
- Plates
- Spoons
- Measuring cups
- Plastic tongs
- Cleanup supplies

Once you’ve replaced these items with child-friendly versions, send a letter to the parents explaining your new implementation, and ask them to talk to their children about this method of dining. The letter doesn’t have to be long, and if you aren’t sure of what to say, you can follow the Sample Family Letter found on page 26.

Now that you’ve informed the parents, you need to educate the children on what family style dining entails. As you explain it, practice the process using empty serving dishes so they get an idea. Be enthusiastic as you talk, because the more excited you are, the more excited the children will be.

**An example:**
“Good morning boys and girls. Today we have something planned that is very fun and exciting. Has anyone heard of family style dining? Family style dining is an activity we do during mealtime. During breakfast, lunch, and snack, I will allow you to fill your own plate with foods you enjoy. Does this sound exciting? A couple of bowls with different items will be placed on the table. Each bowl will have a spoon. Because we share with our friends, we take a spoonful of what’s inside the bowl and pass the bowl to our friends. How many of you like peaches, or chicken, or green beans? Many of these items will be in the bowls. If you happen to drop a food item, it is okay. Ask me for assistance. We will also talk about different things during mealtimes, so if you would like to talk, we are ready to listen. I am so excited about family style dining and I hope you have the best time. Now let’s practice”.
Don’t get discouraged if you run into problems with family style dining. The foods may not always be ready at the same time, or there may not be enough caregivers to supervise the children while preparing the meal. You may have to consider ways of rescheduling food preparations, or work with fellow caregivers to solve other challenges.

As previously mentioned, children love knowing what is expected of them. Discuss with them “how we eat”, and include the concept that every child comes to the table at the same time, and waits until everyone has arrived before filling up their plates. This discussion might have to be repeated several times before the children can understand and follow without difficulty, so don’t expect perfection right away. Most children learn basic table manners when they receive supportive reinforcement on a consistent basis.

Children need to master the skill of passing serving dishes. To do this, you need to have serving bowls that are small, easy to handle, and made of a material that doesn’t get too hot. Use bowls with a wide rim or lip to prevent spilling liquids, and reserve metal dishes for cold foods. Remember, a child’s small hands are more susceptible to heat than ours.

Divide large food portions into several bowls to ensure every child can easily handle them. Teach them to pass the bowls with two hands, and how to hold the bowl without letting their fingers touch the food.

Avoid platters until you feel the children are skilled enough to keep food balanced on them. Most foods that we would put on a plate can easily be served in a bowl.

Sometimes, the type of serving utensils we provide can help children learn to serve themselves better. Small, hard, plastic spoons are easier to use than long-handled ones, and small pitchers with handles are an ideal size and shape for their small hands.

- By using a measuring cup, or a measured, hard-plastic spoon of a specific volume, we can control the portion sizes children will take to ensure there will be enough for everyone else. Suggest the children take one serving now, and additional servings later if they’re still hungry.

- Plastic tongs make it easier for children to pick up food. Let them practice picking things up with the tongs so they can be comfortable in handling them during the meal.
Pouring skills have long been a part of fine motor skills practiced in daycare facilities, usually by playing with sand or beans. Carefully select small pitchers with pouring spouts, either with or without lids, and let the children experiment pouring their own milk. Encourage them not to spill as they fill their cups. Some children succeed more using a milk carton rather than a pitcher. Once they’ve mastered this technique, developmentally appropriate pitchers can be used regularly. But keep in mind, some children will take longer to adapt than others, and may continue requiring assistance. Don’t expect every child to learn this skill at the same rate.

Before a mealtime, make sure there is plenty of food to serve. It’s impossible to relax if you’re worried the children won’t have enough to eat. Remember, children need to feel in control of their eating. If they refuse a food early on, that food must still be available at the end of the meal in case they change their mind.

Mealtimes need to be fun and pleasant for everyone. Be sure you are seated at the table with the children to assist them as needed. If a meal takes longer to prepare than planned, or if an unexpected event causes the caregiver to leave the table unattended, the children may not have that ideal mealtime.

Keep in mind that spills do happen. Healthy eating habits are complicated to develop, so children need time to learn passing and pouring skills, and distractions can cause them to spill. Handle these accidents in a relaxed manner, and never reprimand or criticize the children for making a mess. Offer small pails of soapy water with either child-sized sponges or miniature mops to make cleaning fun. Let them enjoy themselves. Sopping up spilled milk and drying the floor to prevent slipping is really the only thing needed to continue a pleasant mealtime experience. Once the meal is over and the children have returned to play, you can do a full cleaning.
Chapter 4 Review

Family Style Dining, Conversations, and Etiquette

Creating a pleasant environment, managing the picky eater, special diet inclusion, and family style dining are the four main contributing factors to make mealtimes fun and exciting for children. As caregivers, it is our responsibility to meet the child’s nutritional needs while creating good eating habits that will last a lifetime.

1. **What are 3 items needed to implement family style dining?**
   Utensils, children, and a table

2. **What is one thing you should do before implementing family style dining?**
   Send out a parent letter explaining family style dining.

3. **What is something you should avoid doing during family style dining?**
   Preparing for an activity during mealtime, focusing on other tasks during mealtime, or anything else that does not focus directly on children during mealtime.
# Worksheet #1
## Mealtime Assessment

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Feeding Practices</th>
<th>Always</th>
<th>Sometimes</th>
<th>Never</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Mealtimes are pleasant and relaxed for the children</td>
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<tr>
<td>2. Children are allowed plenty of time to eat</td>
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<tr>
<td>3. A variety of food is offered to meet the child’s nutritional needs</td>
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<tr>
<td>4. Easy-to-like foods are offered at each meal.</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>a. Brightly colored foods</td>
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<tr>
<td>b. Finger foods</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>c. Easily defined foods</td>
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<tr>
<td>5. New foods are offered several times a week to broaden the children’s food experiences</td>
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<tr>
<td>6. Portion sizes are appropriate for the children</td>
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<td>7. Second servings of fruits and vegetables are available to assure the children can satisfy their appetites</td>
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<td>8. A safe and sanitary environment is offered to the children.</td>
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<td>9. Food is not used as a reward, punishment, or pacifier; for example:</td>
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<tr>
<td>o Children are not asked to eat their vegetables before they can have a second serving of food or dessert.</td>
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<tr>
<td>o Children are not given a cookie for finishing a task or promised a candy if they get hurt.</td>
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<tr>
<td>o Milk is not delayed until certain foods have been eaten (Always indicate that each of these statements are true at your center)</td>
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<tr>
<td>10. Children are allowed to decide the amount of food they eat.</td>
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<tr>
<td>11. Children are allowed to serve themselves (family style) from bowls and platters of food on the table.</td>
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<td>12. Adults sit at the table with the children throughout the entire meal.</td>
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<td>13. Adults eat the same food as the children.</td>
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<td>14. Adults and children share pleasant conversation at mealtime.</td>
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</table>
Worksheet #2
Mealtime Routine Sample

Typical Routine

Call for Helpers – Children with daily jobs
  Transition Activity – Song
Bathroom and Handwash Break
Children sit at the table as food is placed on the table
Teachers sit and eat with children
Children and teachers dispose of plates
  Transition activity - Song
Worksheet #3
Family Style Mealtime Checklist

Mealtime Routine
☐ Teachers’ routine allows for food to be prepared and ready at the designated mealtime.

Appropriate size bowls and serving utensils
☐ Food is served in bowls of appropriate size that children can lift and pass.
☐ Serving bowls are of appropriate material so they do not conduct heat and are not too hot to pass.
☐ Small size scoops, one-piece plastic tongs, and short-handled hard plastic serving spoons are used.

Mealtime expectations to review with children
☐ We eat together at the table.
☐ We all come to the table at the same time.
☐ We wait until everyone is ready before we begin our meal.
☐ We serve ourselves and pass food to each other.
☐ We use inside voices.

Passing food practice for children
☐ Pass with both hands.
☐ Keep food over the table when passing it.
☐ Hold the bowl by the side to keep fingers out of food.

Serving utensils practice for children
☐ Practice with scoops, tongs, and short-handled hard plastic serving spoons.

Pouring practice for children
☐ Pretend practice.
☐ Practice with dry liquid such as sand or beans.
☐ Practice with water.
☐ Practice with water and pouring into child size cups.

Cleanup practice for children
☐ Pretend cleanup with sponge or cloth.
☐ Pretend floor cleanup with mini-mop or cloth.
☐ Practice cleanup of table and floor with water.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Emergency Directions</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Symptoms</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Food Allergen or Intolerance</td>
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<tr>
<td>Name</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

**Date:**

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*Happy Mealtimes for Healthy Kids | Child Food Program of Texas*
Dear Family,

Over the next few weeks, we will be discussing good behavior at the table. We will be discussing that at our center:

- We all come to the table at the same time
- We wait until everyone is at the table before we start serving the food

Your child will be learning:
- How to serve food for her/himself
- How to pass food to others at the table

We invite you to discuss these ideas with your child and help him or her with serving skills at home.


National Food Service Management Institute (2003). *From the Trainer's Tablet*. University, MS: Author


National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases. (2010). *Understanding Food Allergy.*


