

Display: Coaching Kids to Become Good Eaters

Suggested display set-up

Winning strategies

Things that help kids learn to become good eaters:

- ✓ Make the same meal for everyone
- ✓ Sit and eat together
- ✓ Serve new foods over and over, without praise or pressure
- ✓ Involve kids in growing, shopping and cooking food



Meal time battles? Picky eater? Feeding worries?

Coaching kids to become good eaters:
It's all about learning and practice.

Developed by Population Health Registered Dietitians




northern health

Talking to kids about food

Some words can make learning feel *more* comfortable:

✓ This is a burrito. Kids in Mexico like eating these. See what you think.

✓ These fries are different looking, aren't they? I made them from potatoes and baked them in the oven.



✓ This is a turnip. It has a strong taste. If you try it and don't want to swallow, ask me for a tissue so you can politely spit it out.

✓ How does this taste—sweet or sour? Crunchy or chewy? How does it sound?

Obstacles to success

Things that make learning to eat harder:

- ✗ Having special food for picky eaters
- ✗ Eating without adult role models
- ✗ Seeing a new food only a few times
- ✗ Being served a food they have never seen or touched



How can adults coach kids to become good eaters?

Just like learning a new game or sport, becoming a good eater takes time and practice.

Parents and caregivers are the eating coaches - you have the biggest influence on your kids' eating habits.

Who decides?


Focus on your "jobs" with feeding and let your kids do their "jobs" with eating:

Adults decide:	Kids decide:
What food is offered	Whether to eat
When food is offered	How much to eat
Where food is offered	

Some words can make learning feel *less* comfortable:

✗ Take at least one bite for me.

✗ Try it. You'll like it.



✗ You're such a big boy—you finished all your carrots.

✗ If you eat that, you can have dessert.

Picky eaters are "eaters in training."

Kids are unsure about new foods. Help them become more comfortable:

- Give them lots of chances to learn about food
- Have regular meals and snacks
- Role model good eating habits

Trust your kid's appetite

- When kids are hungry, they will eat.
- Do not pressure or force kids to eat; this may cause them to eat less.
- Resist the urge to comment on how much your kids have eaten.



Recommended client resources to accompany display:

- Coaching Kids to Become Good Eaters (Document Source: [10-421-6048](#))
- Talking to Kids About Food (Document Source: [10-421-6053](#))

Other related resources:

- Poster: Cooking with Kids (Document Source: [10-421-6042](#))
- Vegetables: A Kid-Friendly Approach (Document Source: [10-421-6072](#))
- Picky Eater?: Kids are "Eaters in Training" (Document Source: [10-421-6038](#))

Coaching Kids to Become Good Eaters

Backgrounder

The Population Health Nutrition team created this set of resources in response to common concerns from parents about feeding their young children.

Children are often labelled as “fussy” or “picky” when in fact their eating behaviours are quite normal. Children are “eaters in training.” Learning about food and eating takes time and each child will learn at their own pace. Children do best when they can explore food in a comfortable learning environment. Parents and caregivers can do a lot to help.

Key messages

- Family meals and role modelling support learning and a good relationship with food.
- Supportive language helps to create a safe and comfortable learning environment.
- The Division of Responsibility in Feeding: Adults decide *what* foods to offer, and *when* and *where* to serve meals and snacks. Children decide *whether to eat* and *how much to eat* from the foods that are provided.

Suggestions for supporting parents and caregivers:

- Ask feeding questions: “How is feeding going?” or “How are meals going?”
- Emphasize that learning is a process (for adults and children) and will take time, patience, and consistency.
- Invite them to peruse the display “Coaching Kids to Become Good Eaters.”
- Discuss the Division of Responsibility in Feeding, which supports adult leadership in feeding, while trusting that children will eat the amount they need and will (eventually) learn to like a wide variety of foods.
- Review the handout “Coaching Kids to Become Good Eaters” and invite them select a feeding strategy to try at home.
- Review the handout “Talking to Kids About Food” to explore language that helps parents adhere to the Division of Responsibility, and that invites kids to learn (but avoids pressure).
- If appropriate, consider a referral to a local dietitian or to Dietitian Services at HealthLink BC (Dial 811)

Questions about these resources?

NH staff can connect with the Population Health Nutrition team by emailing
PopHthNutrition@northernhealth.ca



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