

Eyes on

Eating behaviours:

A recipe for healthy eating habits



PARENTS



CENTRES OF EXCELLENCE FOR CHILDREN'S WELL-BEING

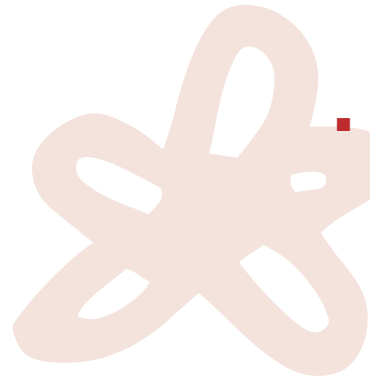
Early Childhood Development



“If we offer children a wide variety of nutritious foods, they are more likely to appreciate new foods.”

What do we know?

- At birth, newborns depend entirely on adults for nourishment; then, as their motor systems develop, they gradually learn to eat on their own.
- If we offer children a wide variety of nutritious foods, they are more likely to appreciate new foods.
- Children who eat often in fast-food restaurants are at risk for obesity and nutritional deficiencies.
- Many young children suffer from eating problems.
- Most often, problem behaviours related to food are temporary and don't require any particular intervention.
- The most widespread problem eating behaviours are malnutrition, overeating and eating foods that are high in fat and refined sugar.
- Children accept or reject food based on its texture, taste, smell, temperature and presentation.
- When children systematically refuse nutritious food, parent-child relationships can become strained and mealtimes can become a major source of stress.
- Putting a lot of pressure on children to eat more or less of certain foods can be harmful and can have the opposite effect from what parents want.



Paying attention to...

What can be done?

... allowing children to develop their own food preferences based on healthy options.

- Adopt healthy habits ourselves and model them by eating fruits and vegetables in front of our children, for example.

... ensuring children associate mealtimes with positive experiences.

- Minimize sources of stress that make children anxious. For example, avoid getting into long arguments if they refuse to eat.
- Allow enough time for meals (more than 10 minutes), but don't require children to stay at the table more than 30 minutes.
- Encourage pleasant conversation among family members.
- Avoid sources of distraction at the table, such as television or games.
- Give children small utensils that are easy to use.

... a child's persistent refusal to eat nutritious foods.

- Consult a health professional.



Information

The Centre of Excellence for Early Childhood Development identifies and summarizes the best scientific work on the social and emotional development of young children. It disseminates this knowledge to a variety of audiences in formats and languages adapted to their needs.

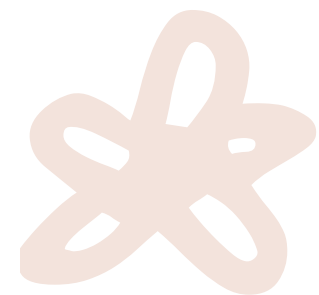
For a more in-depth understanding of eating behaviours in early childhood, consult our experts' articles in the Encyclopedia on Early Childhood Development, available free of charge at www.child-encyclopedia.com.

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