



Mealtime Routines Ideas and Tips



- We all have a **natural appetite**. Just as we feel more hungry than at other times, so do our children. Children know more or less how much they need to eat so let the child follow their appetite. Give children small helpings at first, then they can let us know if they want more.
- **Be Prepared** - Shop in advance and prepare meals in good time so that they don't get too hungry waiting.
- **Stick to regular mealtimes** even when weaning - don't let your toddler pick and snack.
- **Never force your toddler to eat**. Some families get into difficulty by trying to persuade a child to eat. Even when weaning, you'll know when they've had enough. They will turn their heads away, push the bowl on the floor, spit out food and make some 'I've had a enough' noises.
- **Don't reward them for refusing** a nutritious meal by offering them their favourite sweet things or an alternative meal - if they really do hate the food you've prepared, offer them a healthy alternative.
- **Don't make a habit of a meal in front of the TV** - it's ok as an occasional weekend treat, but the TV can be very distracting.





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- **Try to keep your cool** - Children can learn that 'it pays off' to misbehave at mealtimes so they become the centre of attention. Try to keep mealtimes relaxed and calm. Avoid battles by removing the plate as soon as the child has finished eating or is beginning to mess with food.

- **Make it fun** - Chat to your toddler about what you are doing.

Most parents who worry about under-eating have babies who are well-fed or even overweight! If you stay calm and respond sensitively when your toddler refuses food, it's unlikely to become serious. If they hardly eat and regularly won't take anything at all he might just have found the ideal way to get your undivided attention. Never the less, if you are worried, consult your doctor or health visitor, if only to put your mind at rest.

Remember:

Don't

- Don't give them only what you would like.
- Don't give snacks between meals.
- Don't try to bribe with sweets and cakes.
- Eat with your toddler, make it fun.
- Don't let them get over tired.
- Don't force them to eat.

Do

- Encourage them to finish their meal even if it's taking ages. Try to be calm.
- Put very little on the plate to start with.
- Give lots of praise for even a little improvement.
- Invite their friends to tea.
- Invite other people to lunch, it will take the focus off your toddler and you'll have a social life.

First Contact

and
Support Hub

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Ref: Little baby books
Heads-up lookers and communicators

To find your nearest children's
centre call: **01429 284284**

