

AVOID FOOD FIGHTS

LEARNING THE ROLES TO FEED CHILDREN

When it comes to feeding children and encouraging healthy eating, you may wonder how to avoid fights over food.

Children's eating habits are not developed in a day. Parents and caregivers play an important role in teaching children about food. Starting at a young age, food experiences, whether good or bad, can help determine a child's eating habits later in life. Caregivers can influence children's eating habits through the example they set, the types of foods they buy, and what they serve for meals and snacks. You can model healthy eating habits by doing the following:

- Eat a variety of foods from all the food groups
- Be willing to try new foods
- Limit buying foods that are not healthy choices
- Make meal time enjoyable by having a positive attitude
- Eat with the children and do not skip meals
- Take moderate portion sizes
- Drink water and milk instead of soda
- Show productive ways for dealing with stress that do not include food; Reward with attention or small prizes (not food)



Division of Responsibility

Part of avoiding fights over food is knowing what your job is when it comes to feeding and what the child's job is in eating. The table below shows the different responsibilities.



Caregiver Responsibility	Child's Responsibility
Decide what to serve	Choose how much to eat
Decide when to eat	Choose whether to eat or just sit at the table
Decide where to eat	

What to Expect from Children

- Trust children to know how much to eat: as children grow, they may eat a lot of food one day and then not much the next. It will all balance out and they will get the amount they need.
- Set mealtime rules and expect children to follow those rules: this may include speaking politely, sitting quietly while others finish eating, etc.
- Children will choose what to eat from what you serve. Offer the same foods for everyone to choose from. Don't become a short order cook for a picky eater.
- Remember it is okay if the child doesn't eat all the food offered. They are still learning about food and figuring out how much and what they need.
- Children are more likely to try a new food if they have seen you or other children eating that food.
- Many children become fussy eaters between 18 and 24 months.
- Expect ups and downs in eating: a child may like a food one day and decide he doesn't like it the next.
- The more the child is exposed to a food, the more likely she is to try it. A child may need to be exposed to a food 15-20 times before she will even taste it.



Source and for more information visit: <http://ellynsatterinstitute.org>

Michigan Office

139 W Lake Lansing Rd, Suite 120 • East Lansing, MI 48823
Telephone: (800) 234-3287 • Fax: (517) 332-5543

Association for Child Development

www.acdkids.org

Illinois Office

4415 W Harrison St, Suite 535 • Hillside, IL 60162
Telephone: (800) 284-5273 • Fax: (708) 236-0872

In accordance with Federal civil rights law and U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) civil rights regulations and policies, the USDA, its Agencies, offices, and employees, and institutions participating in or administering USDA programs are prohibited from discriminating based on race, color, national origin, sex, disability, age, or reprisal or retaliation for prior civil rights activity in any program or activity conducted or funded by USDA. Persons with disabilities who require alternative means of communication (e.g. Braille, large print, audiotape, American Sign Language, etc.), should contact the Agency (State or local) where they applied for benefits. Individuals who are deaf, hard of hearing or have speech disabilities may contact USDA through the Federal Relay Service at (800) 877-8339. Additionally, program information may be made available in languages other than English. To file a program complaint of discrimination, complete the USDA Program Discrimination Complaint Form, (AD-3027) found online at: http://www.ascr.usda.gov/complaint_filing_cust.html, and at any USDA office, or write a letter addressed to USDA and provide in the letter all of the information requested in the form. To request a copy of the complaint form, call (866) 632-9992. Submit your completed form or letter to USDA by: (1) mail: U.S. Department of Agriculture, Office of the Assistant Secretary for Civil Rights, 1400 Independence Avenue, SW, Washington, D.C. 20250-9410; (2) fax: (202) 690-7442; or, (3) email: program.intake@usda.gov. This institution is an equal opportunity provider. (Rev. 10/2015)