



BETTER
KID CARE
PROGRAM



Family Time Work Time

A B A L A N C I N G A C T

Building Strong Families

The Right Way to Start the Day

Make Meal Times Count

Make meal times special family times. It may be the only time your family is all together. Do busy schedules allow for only one or two meals together each day? If so, make an effort to have this time together. Turn off the television and computer. Limit phone calls. Sit down together. Take time to talk to each other. Really listen to everyone. Give your child a chance to talk about things. Try to keep conversations positive, so meal times are happy times.



Busy families need to start off their day the right way with a healthy breakfast.

- Breakfast gives kids energy to learn and play. Also, adults find they get more done in the morning when they eat breakfast.
- Eating breakfast can help you keep a healthy body weight. It can control your urge to nibble during the day or to eat a big lunch. Young children do need a mid-morning snack, however.
- When children miss breakfast they often have tummy aches, which are really hunger pangs.
- You show your child a good example when you eat breakfast. Children copy what they see their parents doing.

Helpful Hints to Have Time for Breakfast

- Have some easy-to-fix breakfast foods handy.
- Prepare some things the night before, such as making juice, slicing fruit, or hardboiling some eggs.
- Go to bed earlier, so you can get up a bit earlier.
- Have clothing and items needed to take to work, school, or childcare organized the night before to save time in the morning.

When Kids Don't Want to Eat

There may be times when your child may refuse to eat. This can be upsetting, but try to remember the following points:

- ✓ There are times when a child simply may not be hungry or may not be feeling well.
- ✓ Toddlers naturally cut back on the amount they eat. If you think about it, if they continued to eat the same as when they were infants, they would keep on doubling their weight. That would not be healthy!
- ✓ It is your responsibility to buy, prepare, and serve nutritious meals. That's it!

How to Help Your Child

- Wake your child up allowing enough time to eat breakfast. Some people need to be awake for awhile before they are able to eat in the morning. Rushing does not help.
- Offer two or three choices for your child's breakfast. When children feel in control they are more willing to do something.
- When there is time, have your child help with breakfast. Setting the table or simple preparations can be fun for your child. What a nice way to start the day!

- ✓ It is your child's job to decide if and how much to eat.
- ✓ Nutritionists stress that adults should not force a child to eat. This can lead to eating problems later on.
- ✓ Do not make a big deal of it if your child is not hungry at a meal and does not want to eat. Don't turn

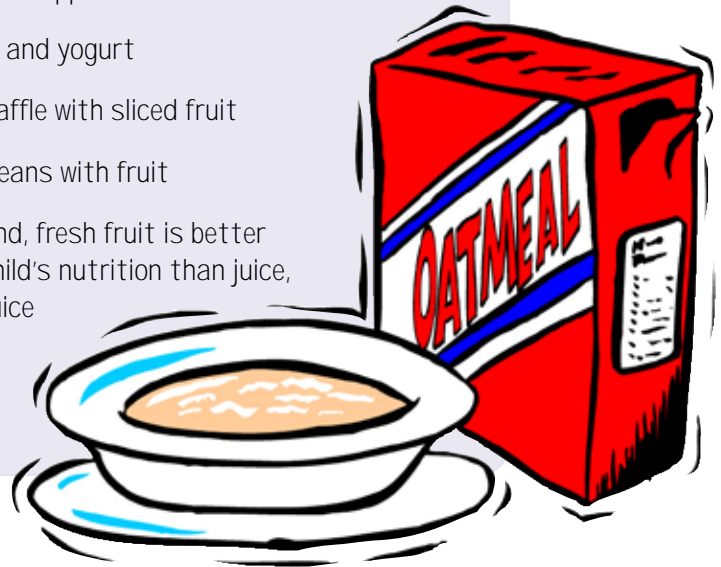
it into a power struggle. A hungry child will eat.

- ✓ If your child does not want to eat, simply say, "You must not be hungry now. You may have something later at snack time."
- ✓ Keep in mind that a young child often needs to try a new food several times before deciding to like it.

- ✓ Children do need to have regular snacks between meals. Just be sure to serve nutritious food for snacks.
- ✓ Always have water available for your child to drink at any time of the day.

Some Ideas for a Quick Breakfast

- Cereal with milk and fruit (avoid sugar-coated cereals)
- Peanut butter toast
- Bagel with cheese
- Reheated rice and a hardboiled egg
- Oatmeal with applesauce
- Pita bread and yogurt
- Toasted waffle with sliced fruit
- Rice and beans with fruit
- Keep in mind, fresh fruit is better for your child's nutrition than juice, because juice contains too much sugar.



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Resources:

Nibbles for Health 6, Fall 2005, Nutrition Newsletter for Parents of Young Children, United States Department of Agriculture, Food and Nutrition Service; Nancy Wilson, January 2006, *Make Meal Times Count* and *When Kids Don't Want to Eat*, Better Kid Care Program, Penn State University

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