

Positive meal times

Mealtimes can be a wonderful opportunity to promote positive outcomes for children. Positive mealtimes are important for fostering children's learning, development, health and wellbeing.

Aspect
@anywhere

Here for you *wherever you are*

Positive mealtimes, are important for ensuring children enjoy nutritious and culturally appropriate food and snacks in a pleasurable, social and safe environment.

Eating and drinking is one of the most complex tasks we engage in as individuals. Eating uses all eight of your sensory systems at the same time. The demands of eating include:

- Postural control
- Mouth and body muscle control and co-ordination
- Tolerating the visual look of the food, smells, texture, the auditory sound of the foods (our mouth is right next to our ears!), touching foods and different tastes.



Studies have shown that 20% of children are fussy eaters at some time, and 5-6% were picky eaters longer term at the ages of 2.5, 3.5 and 4.5 years. Everyone has food preferences and food aversions and these change over our lifetime. Here are some tips to support your children to navigate their way through mealtimes:

Tips to encourage positive meal times

- Sit together at the table with your child
- Support your child's posture - Ensure your child feels support and are comfortable
- Build acceptance to new foods by gradual exposure
- Have set up for meals - routine based
- Model eating foods and emphasise positive responses
- Encourage your child to explore food and get messy with play
- Talk about the food positively, how it is formed, what it is made of, texture and taste
- Provide positive praise when your child tries new food
- Provide child sized utensils
- Incorporate preferred items and interest e.g. a cup with a favourite character or a special chair etc.
- Use visual support wherever possible e.g. meal time placemat, first then board etc.
- Introduce new foods with familiar foods

read more: wehearyou.acecqa.gov.au/2019/02/27/creating-positive-mealtimes