



Mealtime Mentoring

January 2009

Children of all Sizes

Children of all different sizes can be healthy. Size is not the same as health. Eating nutritious foods and keeping active are part of being healthy.

Why are children different sizes?

A child's size depends on many things.

- the sizes of their mother and father
- what they eat and drink
- the kind of lifestyle they live
- the kind of play and activity they are involved in

Some children gain weight before a growth spurt – that's normal.

Should overweight children be placed on a diet or have their food intake restricted?

No. Children should not be placed on a weight loss diet. Eating healthy foods helps them be the size that is right for them. The goal for an overweight child is to grow into his or her present weight.

Children feel bad when they are treated differently. This includes feeding children different foods from those they are with. These feelings may turn into

anger, stress or overeating. Withholding food may teach a child to sneak food when you are not watching.

What can you do to support healthy children at all sizes?

- Plan nutritious meals and snacks using Canada's Food Guide.
- Make meal and snack times calm and pleasant.
- Let the children tell you when they are feeling hungry or feeling full. Children need to learn how to control how much they eat.
- Help a child accept the body he or she was born with. Don't suggest that they should look or be different.
- Support children to like themselves. Having a positive attitude about oneself helps a child eat in a normal healthy way.
- Turn off the TV at meals and snack times.
- Take time to sit down to eat with and talk with the children at meal and snack times.



It is not okay to make fun of a child's size. Children can be healthy at any size.

What is healthy eating?

- Serving breakfast, lunch and supper every day at regular times.
- Choosing healthy morning and afternoon snacks.
- Serving a variety of foods from all food groups.
- Quenching a child's thirst with water.

Are there any foods that should be limited?

Limit foods high in fat, sugar or salt. These are cakes, pastries, doughnuts, commercial muffins, cookies and granola bars, ice cream and frozen desserts, French fries, potato chips, nachos and other salty snacks, fruit flavoured drinks, soft drinks, sport and energy drinks, sweetened hot/cold drinks. These foods, in total, should not be offered more than 3 times a week.

If offering juice, it should be 100% fruit juice that is unsweetened. It should not be offered more than 3 times a week.

Healthy eating is only one part of a healthy lifestyle. Keep children ACTIVE.

- Play active games like hide and seek or tag with the children.
- Go for walks.
- Let them dance to your favourite radio station or CD.
- For birthdays or other celebrations, give skipping ropes, disks or bouncy balls.
- Suggest stretches or sit-ups at different points during the day. This is also a good distraction, if needed!
- Play outside when you can.

Ideas for daily snacks that include a fruit or vegetable.

- toast with peaches
- banana with peanut butter
- apple wedges with cheddar cheese
- watermelon with baked bannock
- fruit cocktail with yogurt
- bagel and cucumbers
- carrot sticks with yogurt dip
- homemade oatmeal muffin and applesauce
- celery and cheese
- strawberries and milk
- blueberries and cottage cheese
- dried apricots and almonds for older children
- sliced cantaloupe with crackers
- raspberries with yogurt
- vegetable soup and whole grain crackers
- raisins with mozzarella cheese
- fruit smoothies
- summer salad with crackers
- potato pancake with fruit cocktail
- orange sections with yogurt



Helping you provide healthy food and a positive eating environment in early learning and child care settings.