



### EAT RIGHT

The new food pyramid suggests

- Serve children fruits and vegetables at every meal and snack and minimize juice. Make them red, orange, green and blue: red peppers, oranges, broccoli, blueberries.
- Make half the grains whole grains: whole wheat bread, oatmeal, brown rice,
- Offer low-fat dairy foods to children over 2 and serve several a day.
- Serve cooked, dry beans and peas, fish, seeds and nuts as nutritious protein sources.
- Use olive and canola oil most often in cooking and limit saturated and hydrogenated fats, i.e. processed foods.
- Avoid foods where sugar and caloric sweeteners (high fructose corn syrup) are the first or second ingredient.

### MOVE OFTEN

- Give children opportunities for play inside and out.
- Develop a physical activity routine.
- Limit screen time to less than ½ hour in the child care setting.
- Set a good example: play with the kids, model a fun and active lifestyle.



## Snohomish Health District Mission Statement

*To improve the health of individuals, families and communities through disease prevention, health promotion, and protection from environmental threats.*

The Child Care Health and Nutrition Consultant offers consultations, presentations, STARS training and mealtime



assessments to the child care community. These special services are designed to help child care providers ensure the health and safety of children in out of home care settings.

**PUBLIC HEALTH**  
ALWAYS WORKING FOR A SAFER AND HEALTHIER COMMUNITY

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## CHILD CARE HEALTH

# ▶ Creating a Healthy Mealtime



**SNOHOMISH  
HEALTH  
DISTRICT**

**Good Health for children involves more than just preparing an array of healthy foods. Ensuring safe food handling, following a division of responsibility, role modeling during meals and serving family style are important parts of developing a healthy mealtime.**

- Follow the Division of Responsibility
- Establish a Mealtime Routine
- Eat with the children
- Consider Serving Family Style

**Follow A Division of Responsibility during Mealtimes:**

**Caregivers are responsible for:**

- Planning the meals/ developing a menu
- Preparing, serving and eating the meals and snacks

**Children are responsible for:**

- How much food is eaten
- Which foods are eaten
- Eating or not eating



### **Establish a Mealtime Routine**

Children appreciate structure. To minimize stress at mealtimes, establish a few structured activities that children can depend on.

- Wash hands prior to all meals and snacks
- Let children take turns helping set the table
- Do some stationary stretches to help get the wiggles out before sitting down
- Ensure enough space is provided for comfortable seating
- Everyone sits down to eat at a designated space
- Avoid waiting more than 5 minutes for the food to arrive
- Sing songs while waiting
- Hold hands and give thanks for the food

### **Eat with children**

When adults eat with children, mealtimes are safe calm and enjoyable.

- Help children establish safe table behavior
- Model eating a variety of foods
- Establish and maintain good table manners
- Make children feel safe and secure
- Facilitate conversations
- Help children serve themselves and pass food each other



to

### **Serve Family Style**

When left to their own internal cues, children effectively respond to feelings of hunger and satisfaction and maintain the ability to self regulate. Adults can help direct children to eat when hungry and stop when satisfied by being aware of their cues. Serving family style gives children the chance to make their own food selection from the foods available. They eat better and mealtimes are a happy occasion.

- Take baby steps to begin the process of family style meal service
- Practice at the sensory table or at other times during the day
- Explain what is going to happen and make it sound exciting.
- Show each child how to serve a food. Give them hand and verbal assists.
- Start by passing one food at a time, add others as children show they are ready.
- Pass around new foods with familiar and well liked foods.
- Be patient. Allow extra time for meals during the learning process.
- Limit waiting by passing the serving bowls around in each direction.
- Use child sized serving bowls, plates and serving utensils.
- Have clean up supplies close at hand. Let the kids help wipe up spills.
- Expect success, even if it seems messy at first. A child's development is worth the effort.