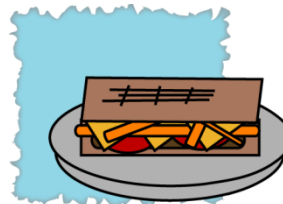


Play with Food

Small children learn how to eat
by playing with food.



Children learn a lot about foods before the food is in their mouth by touching and playing with it.

Playing with food can be messy.
That's okay!

Say yes to a mess!

Let your child learn to enjoy eating
a wide variety of foods.

Finger foods are fun and easy to eat.
Children love finger foods.

Offer finger foods often

☺ **Roll up sandwiches** – Your child can spread mayonnaise or mustard on a tortilla or flat bread. Add thin slices of ham, turkey or roast beef. Top with shredded lettuce or carrots, chopped tomatoes or shredded cheese. Roll up and eat!

☺ **Fruits and veggies** – Your child may be more willing to try new fruits and vegetables if they are served as finger foods. Offer soft fruits and vegetables such as banana chunks, canned peaches and pears, kiwi slices, cooked carrots, green beans and squash chunks.

Your child may want to mash the fruits and vegetables with his fingers before eating them. He is learning how foods feel and taste.

☺ **Stacking Snacks** – Offer small crackers, small slices of cheese, meats (turkey or ham), tomato slices, lettuce pieces and shredded carrots. Let your child stack up his snack and eat!



☺ **Collect small cookie cutters.**
Look for a variety of shapes such as stars, moons, hearts and animals. Cookie cutters are fun for playing with food. Your child can cut shapes out of cheese slices, meat slices, bread, tortillas, kiwi or apple slices.

☺ **Fruity Crackers** – Spread strawberry cream cheese on round crackers. Top with small pieces of fruit – strawberry slices, blueberries, banana slices, peach slices.

☺ **Ants on a Log** – Spread peanut butter into the middle of celery sticks. Top with raisins.

☺ **Mucho Nachos** – Sprinkle shredded cheddar cheese on taco chips. Heat in microwave until cheese melts. Serve with bowls of refried beans, salsa and cooked seasoned hamburger. Dip and eat!

☺ **Fruit Dips** – Put pretzel sticks into chunks of fruit – strawberries, kiwi, peaches, pears, pineapple. Serve with a dish of low fat flavored yogurt, and a dish of granola or coconut. Let your child dip fruit into yogurt and then into granola or coconut.

Is your child a fussy eater?

Your child refuses to eat his lunch. Is he fussy?

Your child may not be hungry.
His growth slows down
between the ages of 2 and 4 years.
His appetite may also slow down
and he will eat less.

Or maybe your child's tummy is full.
Some children will fill their small tummies
with milk, juice or sweet drinks.

- ☺ **Serve milk at mealtimes.** If your child is drinking more than 24 ounces of milk in a day, it's too much.
- ☺ **Limit juice to 6 ounces each day or less.**
- ☺ **Offer water to drink between meals.**
- ☺ **Offer planned snacks between meals.**
Try to have 2 hours without eating snacks before a meal. Offer one snack at 2:00 to 3:00 if dinner is served at 5:00.
If your child snacks all day long, he will not be hungry at mealtimes.

Set a Child's Table

- ☺ **Use a plate or bowl with a rim.** It will be easier for your child to push the food onto his spoon.
- ☺ **Use child size cups, spoons and forks.** Choose a cup that your child's small hands can easily fit around.
- ☺ **Use a booster seat or high chair without a tray.** Help your child sit comfortably at the table. It's hard for your child to eat if his chin is on the table!
- ☺ **Offer soft moist foods cut into bite size pieces.**
- ☺ **Allow food to cool down before serving.**



Why your child may refuse to eat:

- ☺ **Your child may be too tired.**
Most preschool children need an afternoon nap. He will feel better and eat better at dinner time.
- ☺ **Your child may be too excited.**
Have some quiet time before eating. Your child can color pictures at the table while you finish cooking.
- ☺ **Your child may want other foods.**
If he sees others eating chips and candy, he will want to eat chips and candy. Be a good role model for your child.
- ☺ **Your child may want to find out if you will cook something different for him.** Offer a variety of healthy foods. Don't offer to cook different foods for your child. He will learn to eat what the family eats.

