

# GRAB AND GO LESSON

## Tip Sheet: 5 Tips for Understanding a Child's View of Mealtime

**Topic Area:** Nutrition and Management  
**Subtopic Area:** Happy Mealtimes

**Objective:** Recall eight tips for understanding how children view food and mealtimes.

1. Children naturally want to try new foods when they are offered regularly.

**Tip:** Present new foods along with well-liked foods to encourage children to try new foods. Children may need to see a new food offered 10–15 times before they try it.

2. Children respond well to support and encouragement from child care professionals.

**Tip:** Children's meals should be served in a pleasant and comfortable setting. Child care professionals should be supportive but not demanding about what children eat.

3. Children want to feel in control of their eating.

**Tip:** Allow children to make choices from the variety of healthy foods you offer.

4. Children may eat different amounts of food from day to day.

**Tip:** Allow children to decide how much to eat. It is normal for children to have day-to-day and meal-to-meal appetite changes. They know when they feel hungry and when they feel full. It is better to look at children's nutrition over several weeks rather than evaluate at every meal or day. Not only do their appetites vary daily, but their interest in certain foods can also change unexpectedly.

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5. Children may not eat everything on their plate.

**Tip:** Children naturally stop eating when they have had enough; it is important to respect their decision. Child care professionals should avoid commenting about how much a child has eaten or the foods chosen.

### References:

Satter, Ellyn. (1987). *How to get your kid to eat ... But not too much*. Palo Alto: Bull Publishing.

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