

## **Smart Parents Avoid Food Fights**

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### **Ten ideas to help you raise physically and emotionally strong kids with real food**

One Avoid being the food police, it ruins mealtime and it doesn't even work

If mealtime is stressful stop talking about who is eating what at the table, instead enforce good behavior and manners at the table. Talk to your child about food and nutrition when you are not at the table, perhaps while shopping or while making a grocery list. You may be amazed how effective this can be to relieve meal time stress and improve food choices.

Two Sit down and eat as a family as often as you can.

Eating together as a family promotes a sense of togetherness. It socializes children, teaches them how to work in a group, how to use utensils, and how to share. Children who eat with their parents, learn more vocabulary. Teens that eat a meal with their parents five times per week are less likely to smoke, drink, use drugs, or be involved in violence or early sexual activity.

Three Limit Liquid Candy

Soda, Sports drinks, and juice drinks containing large amount of sugar are really candy and not a good thirst quencher. If your child asks for something to drink, consider why you are serving it. Is it to quench thirst, provide nutrition or should it be served as a dessert? Water is the best thirst quencher and 6 ounces of 100% juice is all most children need for nutrition.

Four Serve More Food: To balance the plate serve at least three food items not just one.

For example; instead of a plate of macaroni and cheese, combine a smaller portion of macaroni and cheese with at least two other items such as any of the following: a few carrot slices, sliced fruit, a small roll, a glass of milk. This introduces your child to new foods, and balances a meal nutritionally.

Five Watch your Language

Children believe what their parents say if you call your child a picky eater you increase the chances he will be a picky eater. Instead keep comments positive such as "Johnny is particular about what he eats, but what I like about him is he is trying new foods." Let your child over hear you saying positive things about his food choices to friends and family.

#### Six Don't deprive your child

Research shows many children have to see and taste a new food 10-15 times before accepting it but most parents stop after three tries. Don't be one of those parents that stops too soon. Offering a fruit or vegetable at every meal is a simple way to familiarize your child with a wide variety of foods. Food surveys indicate only one in four children (adults too) eat the recommended servings of fruit and vegetables.

#### Seven Start the Placemat Rule

Make a rule that all meals and snacks are eaten in one location. I suggest you actually use a placemat, the placemat reminds them where to eat- at the table. Eating in one spot helps your children to eat only when hungry and not mindlessly in front of the TV or computer.

#### Eight Party Once Per week

There was a time when ice cream, cookies cake, pizza, chips, and soda were only served at parties or special occasions. If you want to help your child eat well you need to return to that old style of eating. Party foods include: full-sized desserts, pastry, donuts, full size candy bars, pizza, nachos, fried food, liquid candy including soda, fruit drinks and high calorie coffee drinks

#### Nine Don't Super-size it, Child-size it

Make a rule about desserts I have no problem with dessert for kids if it is a child-sized portion of 100-150 calories. Cheesecake, frosted cake, giant cupcakes and giant ice cream cones are not child-size.

#### Ten Chose Wet Snacks

Between meals serve wet snacks most of the time. Limit dry snacks such as crackers, granola bars, rice cakes, pretzels to a one calorie portion and be generous with wet snacks such as fruit, vegetable, and yogurt. Wet snacks are filling because they carry water, fiber and protein.