

# Exploring

## infants and toddlers

a tipsheet for parents and caregivers of children ages 0 to 2



Capital District  
Child Care Council

## Family Style Dining

Family style dining in the child care environment enriches curriculum just as any other activity in a child's day. Remember, having control over serving and portions, empowers young children to become confident and independent. Healthy and happy meals include the following:

- Wash hands before each meal (Babies too!)
- As soon as parents determine the time is right, and as soon as babies show interest in eating solid foods, babies should be encouraged to take part in their meal.
- Help parents understand the importance of their input about meal times and review child care center's mealtime policies.
- Offer foods gradually from approved food plan, and offer only one new food with several familiar foods.
- Allow babies to feed themselves, touch and explore their food and hold their own cup or bottle.
- Remember that when learning to eat and enjoy their food, babies will wear more food than they eat.
- Roll slippery finger foods like sliced bananas, peaches and pears in crushed breakfast cereal.
- Help babies feed themselves so they don't get frustrated.



- Use bibs that are comfortable and easily cleaned between each meal.
- Plan a quiet activity before and after mealtime to help set the mood for a relaxed and more manageable experience.
- Eat with children to protect them from safety hazards, to encourage conversation and to model by eating and enjoying the same food served to children.
- Serve meals in a calm and relaxed environment.
- Present meals and snacks of finger foods that encourage toddlers to feed themselves.
- Use serving containers and utensils that are easy for children to handle.
- Involve children in preparation, passing, portioning, and pouring during every meal.
- Expect spills. Model kindness by cleaning up calmly and replacing a soggy sandwich.
- Let children determine how much to serve themselves and when they are full, however using a guide such as a measuring spoon helps children learn about portion sizes.
- Offer dessert and beverage with the meal instead of after the meal as a reward.
- Slow down and plan ahead, so that mealtimes are meaningful moments shared between babies, their friends and their caregivers.

LEADING THE WAY TO QUALITY CARE



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