

Healthy Children, Healthy Adults



Shared Family-Style Meals

Shared mealtimes can have healthful effects. Children are more likely to try unfamiliar foods and learn about healthy eating if a supportive mealtime environment is created. Children who share family meals are less likely to be overweight. Researchers pooled results from 17 recent studies that looked at shared family mealtimes, including almost 9,900 children under the age of 5 years. Children who shared family meals at least 3 times a week were 12% less likely to be overweight and 24% more likely to eat healthful foods. (1)

A growing number of studies in childcare settings indicate that most caregivers support family-style meals by eating with children and eating the same foods. Oakland Unified School District (OUSD) early childhood centers provide opportunities to promote healthy eating among preschool children. Shared meals include family-style meals in the schools, family home

meals, and group meals with other people.

Early childhood educators can help promote the benefits of shared mealtimes. During mealtimes, encourage children to practice:

- Serving themselves, or serving themselves with adult help.
- Sharing, taking turns, and other social skills;
- Using manners;
- Listening and communicating;
- Using fine motor skills (serving, pouring, scooping);
- Setting the table;
- Preparing and cleaning up;
- Creating a sense of family and community through talking, listening and feeling comfortable and safe with others in the classroom. (2,3,4,)

Promote shared family meals with parents and provide them information about the many benefits of sitting down together and eating with their children. See “*Tips for Parents of Preschool Children*” under “What Should Parents Know About Children.” For example, “Apple” *Tips* is one of the newsletters that talks about family meals.



Photo: Network for a Healthy California

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Helping Children Listen to Their Hunger Cues

Do you eat when you aren't hungry? Do you eat until you are past full? Children are born knowing how much to eat, starting out as perfect regulators of how much food they need. It is up to parents and caregivers/teachers to allow children to hold on to this innate ability.

The problem is that today's environment sends out many external cues that make it difficult to listen to the internal body cues. The obesity rate for preschool children has more than doubled in the past 30 years. Teaching children to recognize, understand, and heed their hunger and fullness cues will help them maintain a healthful weight.

Here are some tips to help:

- Offer food at regular intervals. Regular meals and snacks prevent children from getting too hungry and possible eating excessive amounts when they do eat.
- Trust your children to judge how much they want. If you encourage children to "clean your plates" or eat what is served, you are not letting children heed their own cues.
- Eat together in a designated place, free of distractions (such as play, phones, videos, etc.). Allow plenty of time, so meals and snacks are not rushed.
- Do not use food as a reward or as punishment. Linking food with strong emotions may lead to eating for comfort or stress relief. (1)
- Model healthful behaviors, such as trying new and eating more vegetables and fruits. (2)

Every child is different, as is his/her own genetic blueprint for growth. Trust your children to know how much they need to eat, in order to develop the body that is right for them. Being aware of hunger

and fullness cues can help children eat well and grow up healthy. Provide healthful foods for children to choose from. Schools play a significant role in providing food and shaping children's dietary habits (3).

References

1. Helping kid's listen to their hunger cues. [need reference]
2. E. Satter. Establishing a Child Care Feeding Policy: http://www.earlychildhoodnews.com/earlychildhood/article_view.aspx?ArticleID=366
3. Public Health Institute. Policy Brief, March 2004.

Grow It and Eat It Fresh Campaign!

The University of California Cooperative Extension (UCCE) joins the Oakland Unified School District's (OUSD) "Oakland Eats Garden Fresh" campaign with "Grow It and Eat It Fresh" to help connect the classroom to the cafeteria, linking nutrition education with the produce served at school to maximize impact on children's health and wellness. The "Grow It and Eat Fresh" campaign goal is to increase access to fresh fruits and vegetables.

Most of these services have been initiated at elementary and some middle and high schools. Early Childhood Centers and Pre-K classes have access to these resources:

- School Farmers' Markets—there are 17 markets located within walking distances of early childhood centers. Weekly parents can buy fresh produce at the market. UCCE has distributed School Farmers' Markets schedules to each teacher.
- Healthy snacks provided every day by OUSD. Harvest of the Month, fresh produce of the month, is delivered monthly to ECE centers, Pre-K and some elementary schools.

- School gardens at ECE centers designated as Gold Stars have a garden year-round and are growing seasonal produce offered in OUSD Nutrition Department. Silver Stars are ECEs who have some interest, but need to identify a lead person for the garden.
- Classroom lessons, "*Tips for Busy Early Childhood Professionals*," have activities that include the produce of the month. Lessons are connected to the Pre-K Department of Education Standards.
- Parent nutrition and cooking classes are offered year-round using "*Tips for Parents*" newsletter. All parents receive "*Tips*" monthly.

Quarterly, UCCE will provide an update of what is going on with the Campaigns! Tips on gardening, recipes, and seasonal produce available in the garden will be featured as part of articles.

Photo: Network for a Healthy California



Recipes

ROASTED PUMPKIN

Cut a small pumpkin in half and scoop out fibers and seeds (seeds can be saved for roasting). Spray a cookie sheet with non-stick cooking spray. Place pumpkins, flesh side down on cookie sheet and roast in 400 degree oven, until tender, about 45 minutes. Remove from oven and cool. Scrape the flesh from pumpkin. Mash well or use blender to make a smooth texture and use in the recipe below. Or enjoy the roasted pumpkin (cut into chunks or mashed) as a side dish or snack.

Source:

<http://ucanr.org/sites/CEStanislausCo/files/111791.pdf>

PUMPKIN DELIGHT

Makes 36 tastes at 2 tablespoons each

Ingredients

- 2 (15-ounce) cans 100% pure pumpkin, or 3¾ cups pumpkin puree
- 2 tablespoons of pumpkin pie spice
- 1 sleeve of lowfat graham crackers
- 1 tablespoon honey

Preparation

1. Place the pumpkin in a large bowl.
2. Stir pumpkin spice and honey thoroughly into the pumpkin.
3. Crumble all graham crackers into the pumpkin mixture and stir until well blended. Mixture will be chunky.



4. Place 2 tablespoons of pumpkin mixture on plate. Serve immediately.

Note: Do not give honey to children under the age of one. Lowfat vanilla yogurt may be used in place of honey.

Nutrition information per serving:

Calories 40, Carbohydrate 8 g, Dietary Fiber 0 g, Protein 0 g, Total Fat 0 g, Saturated Fat 0 g, Trans Fat 0 g, Cholesterol 0 mg, Sodium 53 mg

Recipe from:

Harvest of the Month, Network for a Healthy California: http://www.harvestofthemonth.com/download/Fall/Winter%20Squash/WinterSquash_Edu.pdf

Indoor and Outdoor Physical Activities for Early Childhood Children

Research demonstrates that regular physical activity and physical fitness are associated with higher levels of academic performance. Giving students breaks for physical activity throughout the school day

can significantly increase on task behavior. (1).

Early childhood providers can find several ways to incorporate physical activity breaks into the classroom throughout the day. Plan at least two

outdoor play periods each day, and be sure children have plenty of time outside to be active.

The chart below includes some activities. Teachers can mix in or create others.

PHYSICAL ACTIVITY CLASSROOM BREAKS

Physical Activity	
High Knee Run/March	Run or march in place, lifting your knees in front of you as high as you can.
Hula Hoop	Place hula hoop around waist. Do the best you can and have fun! Keep moving your hips!
Tree Pose	Balance on one foot. Bring your hands together in front of you or overhead. Change legs after a count to 15.
Chair Pose	Feet together. Legs together. Keeping your knees together, sit back like you were sitting in a chair. Hold that position as long as you can. Relax when you need to, and try again.
Skate in Place	Pretend to ice skate in place, as child moves side to side bringing one heel behind. Swing your arms side to side. This can be done without hopping by stepping side to side.
Squeeze the Ball	Place a ball between your hands, elbows pointing out to the side. Squeeze your palms in towards the ball. Feel your arms working hard!
Hands and Knees	Extend arms overhead. Lift one knee up as you pull your arms down to touch that knee. Arms go back overhead as that foot goes back down to the ground. Lift the other knee as you pull your arms down to touch the knee.

Reference:

1. Trost, SG and van der Mars H. Why We Should Not Cut P.E., Educational Leadership, Health and Learning, 2009/2010:67(4):60-65.



Photos: Network for a Healthy California

Adapted for Early Childhood Children from 5210 Let's Go, www.letsgo.org

Professional Development Resources

Big Ideas in Small Spaces: Using Centers to Encourage Active Learning

Learning centers can provide early childhood classrooms with a perfect environment in which lesson plans can come to life. Truly effective centers will help children develop in all areas while having fun with peers. This 2-hour course will assist you in understanding the purpose for having learning centers and will lead you through a step-by-step process of how to develop, build and manage a center. Effective learning

centers do not just happen; they take careful planning as to what content to include, how the content will be used, organized, managed, and assessed.

Why Play? Understanding the Role of Play in Early Childhood

Teachers who take this 2-hour course will learn about the positive benefits of play. During play, children can escape the constraints of reality; the usual meanings of objects can be ignored and new meanings substituted. For example, a toy block can be a phone,

a brush, or even a tasty sandwich. During this course, students will learn about the definitions and theories important to the concept of play, appropriate play material and how to support learning and play in early childhood classrooms. Additionally, teachers will develop age appropriate strategies to use to assist children with their play experiences.



Children Health and Wellness Books

Can You Move Like An Elephant?

Judy Hindley

Corgi Childrens. 2005, 32 pp.
ISBN-13: 978-0552548223

Book includes rhythmic text and vibrant illustrations to encourage children to stomp, swing, swoop, or spring like animals.

We Love Fruit!

Fay Robinson

Childrens Press Chicago, 1993, 31 pp.
ISBN-13: 978-0516460062

Name and identify the different types of fruit and how they grow.

Muncha! Muncha! Muncha!

Candace Fleming

Atheneum Books for Young Readers,
202, 32 pp.

ISBN-13: 978-0689831522

Hear the sounds of crunch fresh vegetables being eaten by bunnies.

Photo: Network for a Healthy California



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