

NUTRITION TIDBITS FOR TEACHERS

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Did you know that what you say at mealtime makes a big difference in how kids eat? Research shows that when a teacher repeatedly tells a child to eat more of something, the child actually ends up eating less! So how do you promote healthy eating in a positive way?

Language Tips for Mealtime Conversation

- 1) **Sit down with the kids and eat the same foods the kids are eating.**
- 2) **Keep your language neutral by describing how something tastes.**
 - **DO NOT SAY:** “Eat your strawberries, try this for me, just take one bite”
 - **INSTEAD** you can say: “***This strawberry is very sweet!***”
- 3) **Keep your language neutral by describing how something looks.**
 - **DO NOT SAY:** “No more peaches until you have had broccoli”
 - **INSTEAD** you can say: “***This broccoli looks like a tree! I am eating broccoli trees!***”
- 4) **Describe how a food feels in your mouth or sounds.**
 - **DO NOT SAY:** “Look at Juan, he ate ALL his radishes”
 - **INSTEAD** you can say: “***This radish is crunchy!***”
- 5) **Keep exposing children to new foods.**
 - It can take up to **20 tries** before a child likes a new food.
 - Research shows that repeated exposure is important to trying new foods.

The best way to encourage a child to try new food is to eat the food yourself

References

1. Kharofa RY, Kalkwarf JK, Copeland kA. Are Mealtime Best Practice Guidelines for Child Care Centers Associated with Energy, Vegetable and Fruit Intake? *Childhood Obesity*. 2016;12:52-58.
2. Addessi E, Galloway AT, Visalberghi E, Birch LL. Specific social influences on the acceptance of novel foods in 2–5-year-old children. *Appetite* 2005;45:264–271