

NUTRITION TIDBITS FOR TEACHERS

By Nicole Buhler, Registered Dietitian Nutritionist (RDN)



Mealtime is more than getting food into the kids. It's also about learning social skills and motor skills. You are not just a babysitter, **you are a teacher** who facilitates learning, even at mealtime!

What do children learn at mealtime?

1) Social Skills

- Think of all the social skills learned at the table! How to pass food, how to keep your hands out of your neighbors milk and how to wait your turn when you are ready for seconds.

2) Communication Skills

- One of the first skills many babies learn is how to sign MORE and PLEASE.
- Infants learn a lot about conversation when they listen to adults talk during mealtime.

3) Gross and Fine Motor Skills

- Gross motor skills: sitting up in a chair, keeping your feet on the ground and moving your arms to reach for what you want.
- Fine motor skills: using fingers, then a spoon, then a fork and a spoon! Drinking from a sippy cup, and then an open cup.

4) Cause and Effect

- When I eat, I get full. I can stop eating when I am full.

5) Colors, shapes, numbers

- Talking about food can be a great way to teach colors, numbers, shapes and letters!



What other skills have you noticed infants and toddlers learning at mealtime?