

How We Eat Matters

When it comes to raising healthy kids, it's easy to focus on what they eat. But just as important is **how they eat**.

The routines and habits your child develop around meals – when they eat, where they eat, and how they eat – can shape their energy, growth, and relationship with food for years to come.

Building a Healthy Routine

Children thrive on consistency. Offering meals and snacks at regular times helps their bodies learn when to expect food, so they can feel hungry at mealtimes and satisfied afterward.

Snacks aren't just “extras”—they play an important role in keeping kids energized between meals. Think of them as **mini meals** that help bridge longer gaps in the day, rather than something kids grab constantly.

Helping Kids Listen to Their Bodies

In a fast-paced world, it's easy to rush through meals. But slowing down can make a big difference.

Encourage your child to take their time – chewing fully, pausing between bites, and noticing when they feel full. Simple habits like taking a sip of water between bites can help them stay more aware of their body's signals.

Over time, this helps kids learn to **eat based on hunger, not habit or distraction**.

Why Distraction-Free Eating Matters

Screens and meals don't mix well.

When kids eat while watching TV or using devices, it's harder for them to notice when they're full. They may also begin to associate eating with screen time instead of hunger.

Creating screen-free mealtimes helps children stay present, enjoy their food, and build healthier habits.

Creating a Space for Meals

Where your child eats matters more than you might think.

Sitting down at a table – or another designated eating space – helps make meals feel intentional. It also reinforces routine and gives families a chance to connect.

Eating on the couch, in bed, or on the go can lead to more mindless eating and less awareness of hunger cues.

A Healthy Approach to Food

For kids and teens, the goal is not dieting – it's developing a **healthy lifestyle**.

That means:

- Eating a variety of foods from all food groups
- Staying active most days
- Building habits that are realistic and sustainable
- Enjoying treats in moderation



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Extreme restrictions, skipping meals, or focusing too much on weight can do more harm than good. Healthy changes should feel supportive – not stressful.

Healthy eating is about more than food – it's about creating routines, reducing distractions, and helping kids tune into their bodies.

By modeling these habits at home, you're giving your child the tools to build a **positive, lifelong relationship with food**.

If you have questions or concerns, your UPMC CCP care team and registered dietitians can help guide you every step of the way.

