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EC64-530 Feeding your Pre-School Child

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Feeding...

**YOUR
PRE-SCHOOL
CHILD**



Extension Service
University of Nebraska College of Agriculture and Home Economics
and U. S. Department of Agriculture Cooperating
E. F. Frolik, Dean E. W. Janike, Director

Feeding Your Pre-school Child

Helen Sulek, Ass't. Professor
Human Development and the Family

Begin early to foster good eating habits in your pre-school child. Attitudes he acquires now are likely to go with him the rest of his life.

Daily Needs

He is now eating most foods you serve to older family members. His daily diet should include:

- 3 glasses of milk
 - 1 egg
 - 1 serving of meat, poultry, fish or cheese (Dried peas, beans or peanut butter may be substituted occasionally.)
 - 4 servings of fruits and vegetables (A citrus fruit and a dark green or deep yellow vegetable should be eaten daily. Serve raw fruits and vegetables often.)
 - 4 servings of whole grain or enriched bread and cereals.
- Butter or fortified margarine.

Rich desserts, fried foods and highly seasoned foods should be limited. Sweets, when given, should be part of the meal.

He May Eat Less

Do not be surprised if your pre-schooler eats far less than he did as an infant or toddler. He actually needs less food because of a much

slower rate of growth. Research has shown the reduced quantity has no adverse effect on the child's well-being, so long as the essential nutrients are provided. As a "rule of thumb," nutritionists suggest servings of one level tablespoon of vegetable or meat per year of age. Psychologically, it is far better to give small servings he can finish than to overwhelm him with an amount he cannot possibly eat.



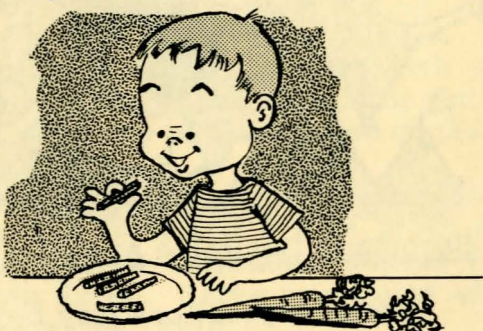
Help Him Develop "Likes"

Accept the fact your child will like some foods better than others. He is also likely to go on food "jags"--liking one food in quantity for a period and refusing it at another. Even though he may eat only a small amount, or refuse it entirely, offer him a variety of foods prepared attractively in a variety of ways. He will eventually accept more foods if exposed to them often.

Introduce a new food prepared in a way he is most likely to accept. Cream a vegetable if he particularly likes other vegetables creamed. Serve a small amount with little fanfare. Do not ask if he wants to try it. Children

of this age are likely to say "no" first. If a food is flatly refused, never force it, but do reintroduce it later. Foods not accepted (milk, eggs, oatmeal, etc.) often can be incorporated in such prepared dishes as puddings or simple cookies, to give the desired nutrients.

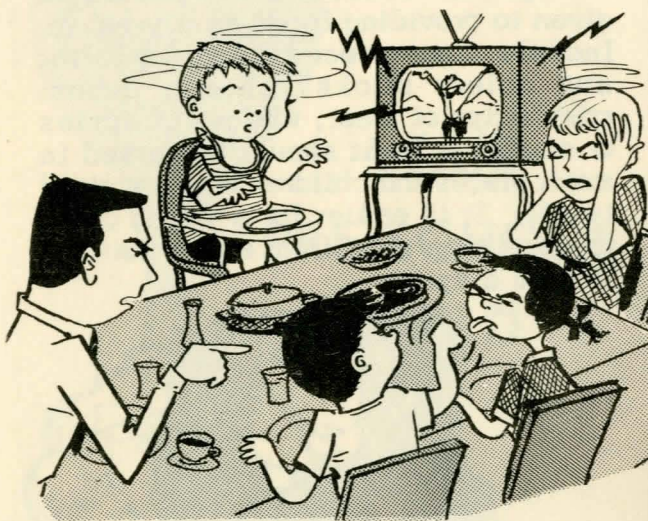
Special consideration should be given to providing foods easily eaten. Include finger foods such as carrot and celery sticks, cheese cubes, crisp strips of toast, wedges of apples or oranges. Meat should be served in small pieces the children will not need to cut. It is easier for a young child to drink thin soup from a cup than sip it from a spoon.



The Setting is Important

Provide the best possible mealtime setting. Your child should be seated in a chair with a back, tall enough so he can reach his plate easily. Place him close to the table with his knees comfortably beneath it. Attractive dishes, cups which do not upset easily, and silver he can manipulate easily add to his comfort. Luncheon size silver is preferred to the dinner size most often used by adults. An attractive plastic place mat under his plate protects the table linen and can provide pictures of interest to a child.

Create a desirable atmosphere for your family's meals. It should be a happy, relaxed time. Save problems for discussion later. Eliminate as many distractions as possible. Do not expect your child to eat as much when away from home. New surroundings are too demanding of his attention.



Encourage Desirable Attitudes

These suggestions may be helpful in developing desirable eating habits:

A healthy child normally should be hungry at mealtime. If there is persistent lack of appetite, consult your pediatrician.

Feed your child before he becomes too irritable and exhausted to eat.

Regulate food intake so your child is hungry at meal time. Some children necessarily need an extra meal or between-meal snack; for others, snacks interfere with mealtime appetites.

Permit him to feed himself (although it may be messy) and to serve himself. Suggest he take what he feels he can eat. He can also pour his own milk from a small pitcher.

Avoid discussions of food dislikes as they are often "contagious" from parent to child.

Expect and tolerate child-like table manners; the important thing now is to develop a wholesome attitude toward eating, not finesse of manners.

Avoid comparisons such as "Eat nicely, like Susie," which breed feelings of competitiveness, not good attitudes.

Concentrate on providing the needed nutritious foods; avoid "stuffing" your child with sweets and extremely large quantities. Obesity often starts during childhood.

Evaluate your own eating habits. Your child learns best from the examples set before him.

And remember, a wholesome, enthusiastic attitude with few food dislikes is far more important than whether or not the plate is "cleaned up" each time.

