



January 2006

Nutrition Backpack

"Clean your plate. Try it you might like it." Can you think of associations with food that you make based on things your parents said to you as a child? Children form habits early on and it is very important to teach healthy eating habits from the start. Building a good foundation is the best way to ensure that children will eat healthy and become adults who eat healthy. Here are some tips for helping children create healthy eating habits.

More Veggies Please

- Children who eat fruits and veggies from a very young age will likely carry that trait into adulthood.
- Avoid baby food desserts and too many fruits.
- Focus on the plain vegetable varieties instead.
- You can also make your own baby food by pureeing the same vegetables that you are eating.
- For tips on making your own baby food visit <http://www.nncc.org/Nutrition/make.babyfd.html>
- When it is safe for children to eat solid foods, provide fresh vegetables and fruits as snacks.
- Stick with whole foods as much as possible and avoid too much fruit juice.

I'll have what she is having

- Have children eat what everyone else is having as early as it is safe to do so.
- Don't get in the habit of making the young child a separate meal; this can discourage trying new things.
- Instead offer familiar favorites with new foods to encourage variety.

No more clean the plate club

- The most widely accepted child feeding rules include:
- Let the child decide how much they want to eat and whether to eat at all.
- The parent or caregiver can decide what to serve, when to eat and where the food will be served.
- This gives the child a sense of freedom to decide which foods they want to choose and to stop eating when they are full
- The key is to provide healthy options, preferably at a dinner table and at normal feeding intervals.
- Don't be discouraged if this doesn't go perfectly at first; it is a process and soon you will have mastered healthy eating as a family.

Remember your children often mimic what they see; you are their best role model. So make healthy eating a family affair.

For more information on Child Feeding, Ellen Satter has authored many great resources.