

Make mealtime “family time”

- Family times are times at home when everyone can help to prepare meals and eat together.
- Family ‘meals’ can be informal. They can be breakfast, lunch or dinner or a snack.
- **What’s important is making time to eat together.**

Allowing children to help with simple jobs in the kitchen teaches them about:

- **Math:** measuring, counting, serving sizes
- **Science:** “What happens to food when it’s cooked?” “What happens when two different foods are mixed together?” “What happens to food once you eat it?”
- **Reading:** exposure to new words and understanding recipes
- **Communication:** could be about anything; the recipe, new ingredients, cleanup or just about how your day was
- **Organization:** plan for what’s needed to make the recipe, set the table, learn that tasks need to be followed through from start to finish.



Recipe: Banana Pops

Ingredients:

- 2 bananas peeled and cut in half
- 1 cup low fat strawberry yogurt
- 1 cup crushed vanilla wafers
- 4 craft sticks



Instructions:

- Insert a craft stick into each banana half.
- Coat banana half with yogurt and roll in wafers.
- Place them on a pan covered with foil that is lightly sprayed with cooking spray.
- Put pan in freezer for 15 minutes.
- This makes a nutritious treat for the whole family.

Try other combinations such as vanilla yogurt with crushed chocolate graham crackers or chocolate yogurt with crushed peanuts.



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Family Mealtime



Family Mealtime Involves Everyone

Planning:

- **Let your child help you make the shopping list.** This is a great time to talk about how we need many kinds of foods to stay healthy.
- **Have your child come shopping with you.** Encourage her to choose fruits and vegetables of different shapes and colors as well as those in season. Select both familiar and new foods.
- **Give your child healthy options to help in the menu planning.** Think about offering your child a choice between different foods within the same food group. For example, your child might be given a choice between spaghetti or lasagna, chicken or meatloaf, spinach or broccoli, etc.



Kitchen Safety:

Children learn best by touching, tasting and smelling, but need to learn that kitchens can be dangerous.

- Wash hands before handling food.
- Stay away from hot stoves and ovens, sharp knives and appliances like blenders, mixers and toasters.
- Expect a little mess. Clean up spills quickly so no one slips or falls. Have your child help with clean up.



Preparation:

Children can perform simple tasks based on their age and ability.

Some ways your child can help are:

Age of Child	Kitchen Task*
2 years old	wipe table tops; scrub vegetables; tear lettuce or greens; snap green beans; wash fruits and vegetables; carry ingredients; watch as you complete task
3 years old	knead dough; pour, mix ingredients; spread soft spreads; wrap potatoes in foil; use a cookie cutter; put trash in garbage
4-5 years old	set the table; mash soft fruits and cooked vegetables; form round shapes with hands; measure dry and liquid ingredients; peel bananas and hard boiled eggs; beat eggs; cut soft foods with a blunt knife

**Children might need help with some tasks.*

During Family Mealtime:

Mealtime is a great time for parents and children to share their feelings and talk about their day. Everyone has a chance to share.

- Turn off the TV or loud music. Kids eat better when there are fewer distractions.
- Remember that “children learn what they live.” Parents can be good models for what they want their children to learn by setting a good example of healthy eating behaviors.
- Praise good mealtime behavior. When children feel good about how they feed themselves, they will eat better.
- Offer small portions. If your child is hungry for more food, you can always offer seconds. This will lead to less wasted food and fewer hassles.



After Family Mealtime:

- Let your child carry dishes or glasses to the sink.
- Let older children help you wash dishes.
- Give everyone a job. This makes clean up quick and easy.