



Serving Meals ‘Family Style’

Your child is learning new skills through family style meals at child care. Food is offered in serving bowls and plates, and children serve themselves and talk with others at mealtime. Family style meals can help your child:

- Build confidence with practice.
- Strengthen the small muscles in the child’s hands.
- Decide how much to eat.
- Talk and connect with others.



Try Family Style Meals at Home

- **Place each food on its own serving plate or bowl.** You can start small by choosing one food item to pass around the table.
- **Sit down together.** Turn off the television and put down the phones for fewer distractions.
- **Pass each serving plate or bowl around to each person at the table.** Help young children pass the bowl or plate if needed.
- **Let each person serve their own food.** Teach children to keep the bowl on the table when serving themselves. Use the serving spoon to scoop the food.
- **Talk with one another.** Check out “Talk With Me” on the next page for ideas.

Support Young Children at Mealtime

1. **Sometimes new foods take time.** Children don’t always take to new foods right away. You may need to offer a food more than 10 times before your child might like it.
2. **Patience works better than pressure.** Offer your children new foods. Then, let them choose how much to eat. Children are more likely to enjoy a food when eating it is their own choice. It also helps them learn to be independent.
3. **Accept that it may be messy at first.** It will take practice for children to learn to serve themselves. But, the mess is worth the benefits. Letting them continue to practice will strengthen their skills—creating less mess.

SNAP and WIC Benefits

Is your household in need of more food? You may qualify for USDA's Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants, and Children (WIC), or other nutrition assistance programs. Find your State contact at www.fns.usda.gov/contacts.



Talk With Me!

Choose fun and happy things to talk about at your next meal. Cut out the conversation starters below. Let your child pick one before each meal.

What made you feel happy today?



What did you have to eat at lunch today?



What's your favorite veggie? Why?



Tell me one thing you learned today.



What made you laugh today?

