**Newsletter Articles on Development and Nutrition**

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**It’s OK to eat a little or a lot** (Month 17-18 Page 7)

Were you told to eat everything on your plate as a child? No one wants to see food wasted. But it’s not a good idea to force your child to eat. Some days, your child will be very hungry and will want more than you’ve put on his plate. Other days, he will be less hungry and won’t want as much. Only your child knows how hungry he is, so put a small amount of the food being served on his plate and let him decide how much to eat. Many parents worry that their toddler isn’t eating enough. But most toddlers eat enough for growth and health. Don’t bribe, beg, or reward him for eating more. Don’t punish your child for eating too little or too much. If you do, your child will feel ashamed of his appetite and will begin to feel guilty about food. If you find there is always food left on his plate, you may be giving him too much in a serving. Cut back a bit.

If your child asks for more of a food and you don’t have any more of it, say you’re sorry there isn’t any more. Then offer more of the food that is left. It takes a lot of patience to help children this age learn to eat well.

**New Foods are Strange** (Month 23-24 Page 6)

It isn’t easy for a young child to switch from baby foods to adult foods. Many toddlers won’t eat a new food the first time it’s offered. When your child rejects a new food, it doesn’t mean she doesn’t like it. It could mean she’s a little afraid of it and needs some time to get used to it.

Here are some things you can do to help:

* Serve yourself the new food. Eat it to show that you like it.
* Encourage her to taste it. But don’t force, bribe, or punish her if she doesn’t.
* Serve the new food again within a few days.

The second time, it won’t seem so new. Again, don’t make a fuss if she doesn’t eat it. Sometimes, it takes ten tries before a toddler will even taste a new food. Most toddlers would be happy to eat nothing but three or four favorite foods. To be well-nourished, they need variety. Fix many different kinds of food for your toddler, not just her favorites. Let her help with simple tasks such as washing vegetables and fruits. Help her enjoy foods like milk, yogurt, cheese, fruits, vegetables, breads, rice, cereals, fish, chicken, meat, eggs, beans, and peanut butter on bread. Let her choose when she will eat a new food.

**Food Rewards Can Backfire** (Month 25-26 Page 5)

“If you behave at the shoe store, I’ll buy you a candy bar.” It is tempting to use food to control your child’s behavior, but food rewards can backfire. Parents often mean well when they say: “You can’t have dessert until you finish all your vegetables.” They think they are doing something good by getting their child to eat the vegetables. But the message the child hears is very different. She hears: “You have to eat the ‘bad’ vegetables in order to get the ‘good’ dessert.” You don’t want your child to think of any foods as “bad.” As your child gets older, she will have more control over what she eats. If she chooses a lot of high sugar, high fat “reward” foods, then she will be missing out on foods that are better for her health.

So, what is a parent to do? Do not use any food — even a more nutritious food — as a bribe or reward. Offer your child a variety of foods, and let her choose how much to eat. If the family is having dessert, offer her a child-size portion regardless of how much she ate at the meal. You can make the dessert something healthy like fruit or a fruit juice popsicle. Reward your child with hugs, kisses, and encouraging words. Try saying something like this: “You behaved well in the shoe store. That made Mommy very happy!” This is a better reward than candy. This reward helps your child feel good about herself.

**Good Times at Mealtime** (Month 29-30 Page 2)

Mealtime is not just time to eat. It can be a time to talk, share, and enjoy being with others.

Research shows that families who eat together frequently have children who do better in school and develop more positive behavior patterns. Family members can discuss what has been happening at school, work, or home. Even though your child may not talk well, let him take part. Ask him questions, and let him answer. Make sure the TV is off, as it can be very distracting for your child. Mealtime is not a good time to discuss family problems about money, misbehavior, and the like. No one feels like eating when there is an argument going on. If this happens often, your child will begin to dread meals. He will eat as quickly as possible, and then want to leave the table. He may begin to have stomach aches because mealtime is unpleasant. During meals, think of things to talk about that will help every- one feel good about themselves and others. Talk about problems after the meal is over. If you are eating alone with your child, you can talk about the names of the foods on his plate, and the color and shape of each food. You can count how many

foods there are on his plate. With a little imagination and planning, you and your toddler can make every meal a happy time.

**Snacks with Appeal** (Month 31-32 Page 4)

Your child was born liking sweet things. That’s why snacks like popsicles, cakes, cookies, and candy are so appealing. They all tend to be high in sugar and very sweet. But these snacks offer little in the way of good nutrition. They provide calories, but almost no vitamins or minerals. They can also lead to dental problems. Many nutritious foods are naturally tasty and will appeal to your child. Here are some suggestions:

* Fruit juice. Instead of fruit-flavored drinks, offer 100 percent fruit juice. Read the label carefully. Look for 100 percent juice. If it says fruit drink, cocktail, or punch, it’s not 100 percent juice. When you use frozen fruit juice concentrate, add an extra can of water. If you buy bottled or canned fruit juice, dilute it with water before your child drinks it. This will give it a milder flavor and stretch your food dollar. Too much juice isn’t great for children either. Try to limit juice intake to 1⁄2 cup each day.
* Yogurt popsicles. If you have a blender, you can make yogurt popsicles. Drain liquid from a 16-ounce package of defrosted frozen fruit. Put the fruit in a saucepan. Add a tablespoon of unflavored gelatin. Heat slowly, stirring until the gelatin dissolves. Place this in a blender with 16 ounces of plain yogurt (2 cups). Blend together. Pour into paper cups. Insert plastic spoons as handles. Cover with foil to keep handles in place and freeze.
* Snack-size pizza. Split an English muffin, and spread about 2 table- spoons of tomato sauce on each half. Sprinkle with grated low-fat cheese and some chopped vegetables. Put your mini-pizzas under the oven broiler or in a toaster oven until the cheese melts.
* Quesadillas. These are easy, popular snacks for children. Sprinkle low-fat cheese on half of a flour tortilla. Fold the other half over the cheese half. Heat in a frying pan or oven at low heat until the cheese melts. This also works well in a microwave. You can add shredded meat, chopped vegetables, or beans with the cheese. Dip in salsa or tomato sauce.
* “Ants on a log.” Place peanut butter down the center of a celery stick. Put some raisin halves on top. It’s ready to eat! Note: This snack is better for toddlers who have all their teeth and can chew well.
* Low-fat cheese or peanut butter on crackers.
* Cut-up veggies and low-fat ranch dressing or dip.
* Cut-up fruit dipped in yogurt.

**Daily Food Guide** (Month 33-34 Page 5)

Use this food guide to plan balanced meals and snacks for your child.

***Grains (3-5 ounces per day)***

1 ounce equivalents =

* 1 slice of whole-grain bread
* ½ cup cooked rice, whole-grain pasta or cereal
* 1 cup cold cereal
* 1 tortilla (6-inch)

***Vegetables (1-1 ½ cups per day)***

1 cup equivalents =

* 1 cup raw or cooked vegetables
* 1 cup vegetable juice
* 2 cups leafy salad greens

***Fruit (1-1 ½ cups per day)***

1 cup equivalents =

* 1 cup raw or cooked fruit
* ½ cup fruit juice plus ½ cup cut-up fruit (no more than ½ cup juice per day)

***Milk (2 cups per day)***

1 cup equivalents =

* 1 cup low-fat or skim milk
* 1 cup yogurt
* 1 ½ ounces natural cheese
* 2 ounces processed cheese

***Meat and beans (2-4 ounces per day)***

* 1 ounce lean meat, chicken or fish
* 1 egg
* ¼ cup beans or tofu
* 1 Tbsp. peanut butter \*

\*Important: Do not give whole nuts or peanuts to very young children (under age 3). To reduce the risk of choking, spread peanut butter thinly on bread or crackers. Feed children only when they are sitting up. Visit www.mypyramid.gov/preschoolers.html to find out ways to teach your child about good nutrition.

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In addition to the “Newsletter Articles” for parents, here are a few articles that may be handy for staff training. They can also be used as handouts for specific parents (for example if a family asks how to get their child to try new foods, or how to continue breastfeeding when the child starts child care). They tend to have information about children of a very specific age, so they are less useful for a newsletter that goes to all families in the program. To locate the articles, go to http://parenting.uwex.edu, select *Parenting in the First Year or Parenting in the Second and Third Years*, and open to the appropriate month and page number.

**Feeding your Baby** (Month 1 Page 6)

**Too soon for solid foods** (Month 2 Page 4)

**Honey article** (Month 2 Page 4) Breastfeeding tip; Do Babies Need Water? (Month 3-4 Page 7)

**Highchair Safety** (Month 4-5 Page 3)

**Introducing the Cup; New Foods for Baby** (Month 6-7 Page 6)

**Building Good Food Habits (for families with infants)** (Month 6-7 Page 6)

**New Foods for Baby** (Month 7-8 Page 7)

**New Foods for Baby** (Month 8-9 Page 6)

**Baby Learns to Feed Himself** (Month 9-10 Page 6)

**Practicing to Use a Spoon** (Month 10-11 Page 6)

**Many Babies want to Suck; What to Feed Baby** (Month 12 Page 6)

**Sometimes it is hard to give up breast or bottle** (Month 13-14 Page 3)

**Nutrition: Mealtime & Snack Routines; Look Mom, I Can Feed Myself!** (Month 15-16 Page 3)

**Chewing Isn’t Easy Without All your Teeth** (Month 21-22 Page 6)