

Healthy Eating Tips For Infants And Toddlers

(NAPS)—Feeding is one of a parent's most important jobs. It helps children grow healthy and strong. But meal and snack times also give parents a chance to help their children feel important and loved; understood and respected; and learn to trust that others will care for them.

Here are some tips about how to nurture a child's overall healthy development through feeding from the experts at ZERO TO THREE, a nonprofit child development organization:

- **Remember: Meals are about more than food.** They are a time to connect with your child. Talk with her and don't let her eat alone.

- **Create routines around mealtime.** Routines help children feel loved and secure. You might say a blessing or share something about your day before each meal.

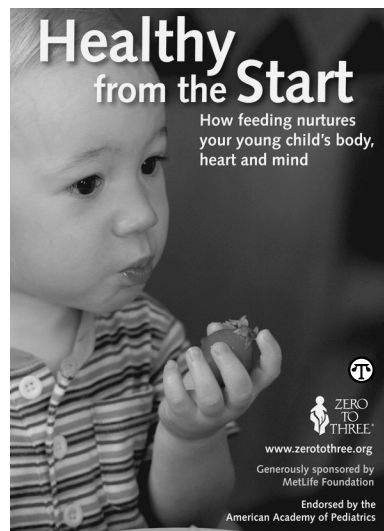
- **Establish regular meal and snack times beginning when your child is 9 to 12 months old.** This helps children learn to link their feelings of hunger with eating at regular times across the day.

- **Offer three to four healthy food choices at each meal—among those your child likes.** Research shows that children will choose a healthy diet when they are offered a selection of healthy foods.

- **Don't force your baby or toddler to eat.** This often results in children refusing the food and eating less.

- **Offer your child a healthy snack between meals if you think he is hungry—**so if he doesn't eat much at a meal, he doesn't have to wait long to eat again.

- **Limit juice to no more than four to six ounces a day.** Juice has lots of sugar. Add water to the juice or offer fresh fruit instead.



Mealtimes are rich opportunities to connect with your child and support his or her overall healthy development.

- **Be flexible about letting little ones get up from the table when they are done.** Babies and toddlers can't sit for long. Plan for three meals a day of about 10 to 20 minutes and two to three snacks of about five to 15 minutes.

- **Don't give up on new foods.** You may have to offer your child a new food 10 to 15 times before he will eat it. Encourage your child to touch the new food, lick and taste it. Let him see you eat it.

- **Turn off the TV (computers, etc.) at mealtimes.** The television can distract children from eating and takes time away from talking as a family.

- **If you are concerned about your child's weight or activity level, talk to your child's health care provider.**

To order copies of the full booklet "Healthy From The Start" and for more information on feeding and other parenting topics, visit www.zerotothree.org.