









Family Meals



The aim of a 'family meal' is for your child to **increase the amount of preferred foods that they eat**. It is also an opportunity for your child to **learn about new foods**.

How to complete a family meal:

<u>Step Number</u>	<u>Explanation</u>
1 	Tell your child: 'In five minutes, it will be eating time'.
2 	Tell your child: 'Now it is washing hands time'. Use different soaps, sponges and temperature of water to keep this task interesting for your child.
3 	Bring your child to the table and help them to sit in their chair - remember ' 90, 90, 90 '! A food that your child likes to eat can be on the table already if this will help your child to sit.
4 	Begin with ' family style serving ' – this is where each person passes each food around the table and takes a small amount to put on their plate.
5 	Everyone eats , allow your child to self feed for the first ten minutes of the meal. It is ok if your child just sits and plays with the food. Adults should talk about the food and use big movements to show the child how the food works in their mouth. Try and make this as fun and positive as possible.
6 	When your child appears to be finished, offer them a drink . You could then re-offer a food after the drink, this should be playful - don't push too hard!
7 	When they have finished with eating and drinking, start a ' clean up ' routine. Encourage your child to help you clean the table.
8 	End the mealtime routine by getting your child to wash their hands again. This signals the end of the mealtime routine.

Meal time Strategies:

Social Modelling

- **Model good feeding** behaviours
- Talk about **how food feels, smells and tastes**
- **Over-exaggerate** biting, chewing and swallowing
- Your **child should not be the focus** of the meal
- **Meal times should be enjoyable** and the food should be interesting!
- Your child should be **involved in all aspects of the meal** including food preparation, serving and cleaning up



Structure of meals and snacks

- Use the **same location** for your meals and snacks i.e. dining table
- Try to eat at the same time every day
- Present foods in **small, easily chewable pieces** that can be finger fed if needed
- Have **one 'safe' food at every meal**. This is a food that you know your child will eat
- Several foods should be on the table to **expose your child to new foods**
- Limit **snack times to fifteen minutes** and **meal times to thirty minutes**



Reinforcement

- Give your child **lots of praise for any positive food behaviour!**
- **Praise their siblings** for positive eating behaviours too
- **Allow your child to touch and play with the food** so they get used to the feel of the foods on their hands and fingers

