

Top tips

- Avoid using the terms healthy or unhealthy to describe food.
- Talk about the properties of a food and how it can help our bodies and minds.
- Steer clear of using food as a reward or using the dessert bargain.
- Ask children what they like and don't like about a new food. Share what you like, too!
- Try not to pressurise children into eating a specific food, even if your intentions are good.
- Encourage chidren to eat until they feel full, rather than asking them to clear their plates.
- Don't talk about diets or food avoidance.
- Expose children to a wide range of foods where possible without pressure. Why not just leave new foods on the table, or even try a bite yourself?





We put children and young people's health centre stage and support schools to make the healthy choice the easy choice.



Any questions?
Get in touch with us...
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How to talk to children and young people about food



How to talk to children and young people about food

We talk about food every day, but often don't consider that the words we choose can have a big impact on someone else's relationship with food.

Studies show that giving positive "do" messages about health are more effective than negative "don't" messages. For example, saying "eating more protein will help your muscles grow", is received more positively than "don't eat junk food - it's unhealthy".







Instead of saying:

"Eat a bit more; one more bite and you can go out to play."

Try this:

"Do you feel like you have had enough? Remember there will be no more food until..."

Learning to eat until you're full is a really important skill. Focus on teaching children to recognise and respond to that feeling of fullness, rather than clearing their plate. Explaining when there will next be a chance to eat helps them to make an informed decision about whether to eat more or not.

Top tip: Keeping your desserts healthy, for example, chopped fruit and plain yoghurt, means a second course is another chance to eat well, too.



Instead of saying:

"Don't forget to eat your veg."

Try this:

"What about this vegetable? Have you tried these before?"

Offering a variety of veg, and taking away the demand to finish them, is a good way of encouraging children to explore new foods without pressure. Serve small amounts if you're worried about waste, and let them see you enjoy them too.

Praise them for trying a new food, whether or not they liked it. Find out what it was like to try. How did it taste, smell, feel in their mouth?

