• Make it easy for your child to reach the table by providing the right sized chair that provides back and foot support.

• Set a good example by eating nutritious food, trying new food, and using good table manners.

• Turn the television off. Talk to each other instead of watching the news.

• Toddlers are often picky eaters. They may refuse to eat foods they once loved, and they may hate vegetables. If your child is growing normally, it’s usually not worth power struggles to get him to eat. Offer nutritious foods several times on the plate, prepared various ways, and chances are that he will try them sooner or later.
Many American families don’t eat many meals together anymore. By the time a child reaches school age, his parents have control over only half of what he eats every day. So, how can you make sure your child is eating well?

What can you do?

As parents, you are responsible for making sure your children get the healthy foods they need. Here is a guide to help you plan healthy meals:

Daily Food Needs
Offer small servings of a variety of foods daily to provide protein, energy, fats, vitamins, and minerals your child needs.

- Six or more servings of whole-grain breads, pastas, and cereals.
- Two servings of fruits, and three of vegetables.
- Two servings of meat, nuts, seeds, or legumes.
- At least three servings of calcium-rich dairy foods every day.

Some children and adults don’t get enough iron or Vitamins A and C. To increase iron, serve meats, dry beans and peas, whole grains and enriched cereals every day.

A Nutritious Breakfast
Remember the old saying, “Breakfast is the most important meal of the day?” When a child skips breakfast, his thinking processes just don’t work at their peak, and he is missing 1/4 to 1/3 of his daily nutrient needs.

A nutritious breakfast of an enriched whole-grain cereal with milk and fruit or a piece of cheese toast and a glass of juice can start the day off right. The school’s breakfast and lunch programs are a good way to make sure your child gets the nutrients he needs when you cannot fix his meals.

Snack-Time Tips
Don’t make empty-calorie foods available. Low-nutrition snacks like soft drinks, chips, or candy may fill kids up without giving them important vitamins and minerals.

Most children get plenty of these salty, fat-filled, and sweet snacks outside the home without having them served at home, too.

Instead, make sure nutritious snacks are available. Stock up on:

- Fruits (fresh, canned or dried) and juices.
- Whole-grain breads and lean meats for sandwiches.
- Peanut butter.
- Ready-to-eat raw vegetables with low-fat dips or dressings.
- Low-fat or non-fat dairy foods like milk, fruit yogurt or cheese (unless your child is under two and still needs whole milk).

When your child comes in hot, thirsty, and ready for something cold to drink, the best beverage to offer is still water! Add a lemon or lime slice for zest.

And what about vitamin/mineral supplements? When possible, rely on good food, not supplements, to supply your child’s vitamin and mineral requirements and to help establish good eating habits.

If you wish to give your child a supplement anyway, use a multiple vitamin-mineral supplement that does not provide more than 100% of the Daily Value (DV) of each nutrient. Avoid single-nutrient supplements unless recommended by a dietitian or doctor.

Making Mealtime Pleasant

Mealtimes are also times for the family to enjoy each other’s company. To make these times together happier:

- Talk about positive things rather than “the trouble he got into at school today.”