

## Food for thought

**“Healthy eating means eating a well-balanced diet which includes a range of foods, eaten with ease and enjoyment”. Unfortunately someone forgot to tell this to my toddlers and I have spent many sleepless nights worrying about their diet. Indeed, most parents I know worry about the eating habits of their children (whether it is eating too little, eating too much or eating the wrong things). Here are my Top Tips...**



**“It’s quality rather than quantity”**  
Try not to worry if your children have days when they hardly eat at all followed by days where they eat twice as much as you would expect. Keep portions small and offer “seconds” if they are hungry. Never put your child “on a diet” without professional advice.

**“Variety is the spice of life”**  
If your child is eating items from the four major food groups every day they are probably getting all the nutrients they need, even if they do not gobble up everything you offer.

**“Lead by example”**  
Eat with your kids and eat healthily. Have regular mealtimes and healthy snacks. Try making an occasion of family mealtimes by sitting up at the table, involving them in the preparation and serving, and talking with them.

**“Beauty is in the eye of the beholder”**  
Make plates colourful and attractive, experimenting with different shapes and textures. Children can be encouraged to “eat a rainbow”.

**“Curiosity killed the cat”**  
Most children love experimenting with food. Arouse their curiosity with the addition of small amounts of food colouring, by creating fruit juice cocktails until they find their favourite mix or having a mashed potato treasure hunt where each vegetable found and eaten is rewarded with an extra chocolate button on their icecream.

**“An apple a day...”**  
The “5 a day” rule says that eating 5 portions of fruit and vegetables each day is good for both you and your child. Remember, a portion is the amount that fits in a hand - so don’t expect them to eat as much fruit or veg as you.

**“Green eggs and ham”**  
This book by Dr Seuss is all about trying new foods. We have introduced “try something new days” where I buy a selection of exotic fruit or salad veg and my children test them out, giving them each a score.

Fiona Burt, Playtime Co-ordinator, Care for the Family

If you have specific issues or need medical advice please consult your health visitor or see your GP for a referral to a Paediatric Dietitian.

**For more information and ideas check out:**

[www.eatwell.gov.uk/healthydiet/eatwellplate](http://www.eatwell.gov.uk/healthydiet/eatwellplate) and  
[www.eatwell.gov.uk/agesandstages/children/yrtoddler](http://www.eatwell.gov.uk/agesandstages/children/yrtoddler)  
[www.kidsandnutrition.co.uk/EnsureChildGettingFiveADay.html](http://www.kidsandnutrition.co.uk/EnsureChildGettingFiveADay.html)

Your *Family* Charity

Care for the Family has been supporting and encouraging families in the UK since 1988. Its family-building events have been attended by over 320,000 people and many more have been helped through special initiatives - including stepfamilies, bereaved parents and those parenting alone. Founded by best-selling author and speaker Rob Parsons, the charity is committed to strengthening family life and helping those who face family difficulties.

The information in this handout is supplied in good faith, but Care for the Family cannot accept responsibility for any advice or recommendations made by other organisations or websites.

### Discover more online

Here are some quotes about healthy eating from Support Net, an online resource from Care for the Family which provides information, advice and support on a range of issues affecting families.



**“Healthy eating does not mean eating only so called ‘healthy foods’, and a balanced diet will not exclude any foods that are perceived to be ‘bad’ or ‘naughty’, nor will it involve anxiety about food or weight.”**

**“It is crucial that parents pass on good eating habits to their children in order to prevent eating problems developing”**

If you, or a member of your family are struggling with eating disorders check out [www.careforthefamily.org.uk/supportnet/](http://www.careforthefamily.org.uk/supportnet/) or call Care for the Family on **(029) 2081 0800**

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