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Behind the Scenes

NEAT: Nutrition Education Aimed at Toddlers
University-Community Partnership Grant
Developed by The NEAT Research Team, Michigan State University

Principal Investigator
Mildred A. Horodynski, Ph.D., R.N.C.
College of Nursing

Co-Investigators
• Sharon Hoerr, Ph.D., R.D.
  Dept. of Food Science & Human Nutrition
• Gayle Coleman, M.S., R.D.
  Michigan State University Extension
• Dawn Contreras, Ph.D.
  Michigan State University Extension
• Mary Jo Arndt, Ph.D., R.N.
  College of Nursing
• Manfred Stommel, Ph.D.
  College of Nursing

For more information
NEAT: Nutrition Education Aimed at Toddlers Center:
The NEAT Research Project
Mildred A. Horodynski, Ph.D., R.N.C.
Principal Investigator
Michigan State University
The NEAT Research Office
415 West Fee Hall
East Lansing, MI 48824-1317
Telephone: (517) 355-6744
FAX: (517) 353-8536
millie@msu.edu

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Acknowledgments


Bright Futures at Georgetown University: http://www.brightfutures.org/nutrition/resources.html


Ellyn Satter Associates: www.ellynsatter.com


Michigan Department of Community Health – Feeding your Toddler: http://www.michigan.gov/mdch/0,1607,7-132-2942_4910_4918-12543---,00.html


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University of Connecticut-Shopping Tips: http://www.fnp.uconn.edu/shoptips/shoptips.php


Women, Infants, and Children – WIC Health: http://www.wmich.edu/wic/

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Permission to Use Selected Supplemental Materials

Title / permission granted by:

**Bright Ideas for Sharing Food Tasks**
Good News For Parents. 1999 University of California Cooperative Extension EFNEP

**Sharing Food Tasks**
1999 University of California Cooperative Extension EFNEP

**Parents & Children Sharing Food Tasks**
University of California Cooperative Extension (Pre-Post Test) EFNEP 5500

**Keys to Creating Healthy Attitudes Towards Food**

**Healthy Attitudes Towards Food**

**There’s a Picky Eater at Home**

**Making Mealtimes Pleasant**
Authors: Sandra Ryan R.D. Nutritionist Iowa Department of Public Health Elisabeth Schafer Ph.D. Associate Professor - Extension Nutrition and Health Specialist Iowa State University National Network for Child Care - NNCC. Part of CYFERNET, the National Extension Service Children Youth and Family Educational Research Network. Permission is granted to reproduce these materials in whole or in part for educational purposes only (not for profit beyond the cost of reproduction) provided that the author and Network receive acknowledgment and this notice is included: Reprinted with permission from the National Network for Child Care- NNCC. Oesterreich, L. (1995). Making mealtimes pleasant. In L. Oesterreich, B. Holt, & S. Karas, Iowa family child care handbook [Pm 1541] (pp.174-175). Ames, IA: Iowa State University Extension.

**Household Measurements for Toddler Foods**

**Plan Ahead for Healthy Food Choices**
Adapted from Team Nutrition, Food Guide Pyramid for Young Children/Healthy Eating Tips U.S. Department of Agriculture Food and Nutrition Service; August 2000.

**P.L.A.N. Ahead for Mealtime Behavior Problems**

**Create a Casserole**

**Quick and Easy Meals**
Introduction

The Nutrition Education Aimed at Toddlers (NEAT) curriculum is designed to help parents or other adult caregivers encourage their toddlers to develop healthy eating habits. It promotes parent-toddler interaction for a healthy mealtime environment.

The focus of the NEAT curriculum is to improve parent-toddler mealtime interaction by empowering adults to become responsive to children’s verbal and non-verbal behaviors. When the parent is responsive, the child can more easily and positively communicate needs, wants, and desires. When the child is positively and effectively communicating, the parent becomes more responsive. As a result, when the parent focuses on responding to the child, the child is able to clearly communicate hunger and fullness. When the child clearly communicates eating preferences, the child is empowered to self-regulate food intake.

The NEAT curriculum includes structured lesson plans for a series of four lessons and eight reinforcing activities that integrate parenting with nutrition education. The lessons and reinforcing activities include information on child development, encouraging toddlers to self-regulate their food intake, and dealing with challenging feeding situations such as picky eaters. Activities and key points for discussion in the curriculum are designed to help parents practice skills that encourage toddlers’ development of healthy eating habits, identify ideas for solving mealtime and/or feeding problems they might be encountering with their toddlers, and increase their confidence in being able to implement these practices. Each lesson also promotes parent-toddler interaction for a healthy mealtime environment.

The curriculum emphasizes the role of adults and toddlers in the feeding relationship, that is, adults are responsible for providing food on a regular basis and determining what kind of food is offered, and toddlers are responsible for determining how much to eat. Focus groups conducted with rural, low-income parents and adult caregivers of toddlers helped to determine the content, shape the format, and design the curriculum. The curriculum is based on current recommendations of the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA), American Academy of Pediatrics, and other recognized national organizations.

Note: It is important to note that if a child is underweight, overweight, or has any other health condition, parents should seek care from a healthcare provider. This curriculum is not intended to provide medical nutrition therapy.

Please note that the words “parent,” “her,” and “she” will be used throughout the Curriculum to reference either the parent of the toddler or other primary caregiver who is responsible for feeding the toddler; and the words “toddler,” “her,” and “she” will be used to reference the toddler.
A major goal of Healthy People 2010 is that all children in the United States start school ready to learn, in part, because they are healthy, well nourished, and thriving. Self-regulation and healthy eating behaviors of young children are related to sound nutritional health and child well being. Parenting skills are directly related to development of self-regulation and healthy eating behaviors in children. Both over-nutrition and under-nutrition, particularly related to energy intake and weight, are health concerns for toddlers.

The Healthy People 2010 priorities also include a need to decrease the number of obese adults and overweight children. To prevent obesity later in life, early intervention efforts that include both the child and family must be instituted. Healthy eating patterns developed early have the potential to persist into adulthood. Dietary intake in early childhood is generally determined by parents. Mothers are most often the dominant influence on both children’s food consumption and dietary habits. Interventions that provide parents with knowledge often promote success in feeding and in toddlers learning healthy eating behaviors. In addition, parenting skills are directly related to the development of self-regulation and healthy eating behaviors in children.

A search of the literature indicates the lack of curricula focused on promoting healthy eating habits in toddlers despite the fact that this is an ideal time to promote healthy eating habits. Between the ages of one and three years, children are changing the way they eat, think, talk, and respond to people. Toddlers are often transitioning from breastfeeding and/or drinking utensils and foods designed specifically for babies, to drinking from a cup and eating foods that are eaten by the rest of the family. They are developing self-feeding skills, becoming more independent from their parents, and learning to communicate their preferences. In addition, the amount of food they consume fluctuates primarily in response to changes in their rates of growth. These changes in toddlers can cause frustration for parents. The NEAT curriculum was developed to help parents understand toddler development related to eating and developmental changes, and develop skills and strategies for dealing with feeding toddlers.
Curriculum Delivery

The four lessons in the NEAT curriculum are designed for small group instruction. A group of four to eight individuals is ideal for group interaction and experiential learning, and offers opportunities for support among group members. Each lesson plan lists the objectives for the lesson, materials needed, and advance preparation. They include information on nutrition and parenting, discussion questions, at least one opportunity for hands-on learning and a food preparation activity. An informal setting with access to a kitchen, such as a community center, a local Cooperative Extension Service office or health department classroom, or church fellowship area, is best for teaching the lessons. If kitchen facilities are not available, food preparation activities in the lessons can be modified. For example, the instructor might bring a toaster oven to broil the mini pizzas in the lesson, ‘Tailoring Meals for Tots and Time,’ if an oven is not available. The instructor should plan 90 minutes to teach each lesson including time for discussion, food preparation and tasting. The lessons also can be adapted for individual instruction such as home visits.

The eight reinforcing activities in the NEAT curriculum are designed to be integrated into other opportunities for individual instruction after these individuals have completed the four NEAT lessons. For example, reinforcing activities can be built into a series of other lessons such as additional lessons on food, nutrition, parenting, or financial management. Each reinforcing activity takes about 10 minutes to complete. Collaboration between the Cooperative Extension Service and agencies with programs such as Early Head Start (EHS) or the Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants and Children (WIC) provide options for including the reinforcing activities. In a research project conducted by the Michigan State University (MSU) College of Nursing in collaboration with MSU Extension and EHS, MSU Extension instructors taught the four lessons and EHS home visitors built the reinforcing activities into routine visits with families who had completed the lesson series. Each reinforcing activity focuses on one concept taught during the lessons and is designed to be completed in ten minutes. Each activity includes a question that introduces the concept, which can help the instructor determine the parents’ understanding of the concept and identify concerns the parents might have. It also includes a hands-on activity focused on the concept and an opportunity for a parent to set a goal related to feeding her toddler. Instructors are encouraged to use the LOVE (Listen, Observe, Validate and Empower) approach when doing the reinforcing activities.
The cost to teach the NEAT curriculum is minimal assuming there is no charge for space, and that educators’ time and travel are covered through other sources. Each lesson includes a food preparation and tasting activity using modestly-priced foods. Alternate recipes could be substituted for the suggested recipe. The items given to participants to reinforce the lesson content in each lesson cost approximately 50 cents per participant. Other items that reinforce the lesson content and might be even lower in cost could be used as alternatives to the suggested items.

The NEAT curriculum is designed for instructors who have basic nutrition, food safety, food preparation and parenting knowledge. Training is suggested if educators do not have a basic understanding of one or more of these areas, or are not comfortable with teaching the lessons and reinforcing activities. Competencies needed to teach the NEAT curriculum are outlined in this leader guide. The Michigan State University College of Nursing offers training upon request (see the Resource Section of this Guide).

Competencies for Educators

- Demonstrates a strength-based approach to delivering programs.
- Makes learning fun, interactive and interesting.
- Understands and utilizes adult learning principles.
- Utilizes effective facilitation skills for group and individual teaching.
- Understands the process of goal setting and is able to assist others using this process.
- Is able to identify key stages of development for young children.
- Understands how child development relates to feeding toddlers and mealtime management.
- Understands the division of responsibility between adults and children in the feeding relationship.
- Understands the importance of the primary caregiver modeling positive behavior for children.
- Is able to identify key elements to a positive eating situation such as children being seated while eating, adults interacting with children and the absence of distracters such as the television.
- Is able to describe strategies for introducing new foods to children and dealing with a picky eater.
- Is able to describe positive discipline techniques.
- Understands key food safety concepts such as the importance of proper hand washing.
- Understands key concepts in the 2005 USDA Food Guidance System.
- Is able to describe strategies for applying the USDA Food Guidance System for daily meals and snacks.
Evaluation

Several evaluation instruments are available to use with the NEAT curriculum. Use the tool(s) that best fit the teaching situation and assess the impacts desired.

- Use the adult and toddler 24-hour dietary recalls with parents to collect self-reported food intake for the adults and parent-reported dietary intake for their toddlers. Plan to do the dietary recalls prior to teaching the lessons and after participants complete the reinforcing activities. Dietary recalls should be done with individuals and therefore would be time consuming to complete with groups unless multiple interviewers are available to collect this information. Therefore, it might not be practical to do 24-hour dietary recalls with a group of participants.

- Use the Toddler-Parent Mealtime Behavior Questionnaire tool (available upon request) to identify parents’ behaviors related to feeding their toddlers. Plan to do this assessment prior to teaching the lessons and after participants complete the reinforcing activities. This tool assesses changes in self-reported behaviors.

- Several tools are available to assess whether participants found the lessons and reinforcing activities to be useful (available in the Supplemental Materials Packet).

Resources

Training is available through the Michigan State University College of Nursing: Mildred A. Horodynski, Ph.D., R.N.C.; 415B West Fee Hall; East Lansing, MI 48823; (517) 355-6744.


Ellyn Satter Associates: www.elynsatter.com


Women, Infants, and Children – WIC Health: http://www.wmich.edu/wic/

Michigan Department of Community Health – Feeding your Toddler: http://www.michigan.gov/mdch/0,1607,7-132-2942_4910_4918-12543—,00.html


Bright Futures at Georgetown University: http://www.brightfutures.org/nutrition/resources.html

University of Connecticut-Shopping Tips: http://www.fnp.uconn.edu/shoptips/shoptips.php
References


This publication is available in alternate media on request.

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Please email us with your questions, concerns or suggestions at millie@msu.edu
Nutrition Education Aimed at Toddlers

Class Lessons

Developed and produced by
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Lesson

Toddlers: Developing, Growing, and Eating
Toddlers: Developing, Growing, and Eating

Objective

By the end of the lesson, parents will have:

1. Identified developmental stages for toddlers and preschoolers.
2. Discussed strategies to prevent choking in young children.
3. Discussed the importance of thoroughly washing hands to prevent contamination.
4. Discussed the role of parents and toddlers in relation to feeding/eating.
5. Discussed age-appropriate food preparation activities for toddlers.

If toddlers are available for the latter part of the lesson, add these objectives.

6. Practiced washing their hands and their toddler’s hands thoroughly.
7. Modeled preparing food with toddlers.
8. Spent time sitting, eating, and talking with their toddler.

Motivation:
Learn how your toddler’s development affects how she eats.
Materials needed

- Toddler and preschool development matrix (participant handout and master copy included)
- Matrix squares (master copies included) and envelopes
- Glue sticks
- Straw and larger cardboard tube (such as tube from empty role of toilet paper or paper towels)
- Samples of food/items that might cause choking (hot dog, grapes, popcorn, candy, raw vegetable pieces, spoonful of peanut butter)
- Ingredients and supplies (re-sealable plastic bag and measuring cups) to prepare Cereal Mix (master copy of recipe included)

*If toddlers are available for the latter part of the lesson, add these items.*

- Milk
- Glasses in adult-size and child-size
- Paper plates
- Paper towels
- Clean beach towels or blankets for “tables” on the floor
- Highchairs or boosters seats for children who might need them (12-18 months old)

Before the lesson

- Copy handouts for participants and put matrix squares in envelopes.
Doing the lesson

- Welcome parents as a group. Ask parents to introduce themselves and share a little bit of information about their toddlers.

- Explain that toddlers change rapidly from age one to three. During this time they change in the way they eat, think, talk, and respond to people. All of these changes influence the parent-toddler feeding relationship. The first activity will help us look at some of these changes.

1. Distribute the blank “Toddler and Preschool Development” matrix and the envelopes containing the matrix squares. Each parent should receive one empty matrix handout and one envelope.

2. Have the parents sort the matrix squares according to the number in the lower right hand corner. For example, all squares with the number one should be grouped together, all number two squares should be grouped together, and so on.

3. Once the squares have been sorted, ask the parents to order all the number 1 squares according to the age at which they frequently occur.

4. After the squares have been ordered, they can be placed in the row marked #1. Continue with this process until all the squares have been placed on the matrix.

5. Once all the squares have been sorted and placed on the game sheet, the activity can be self-checked by having the parents turn over the squares. The letters on the back of the squares will spell a word vertically. The squares in the first column will spell the word, “ONE’S”. The squares in the second column will spell the word, “AGE#2”, and the squares in the final column will spell the word, “THREE.”

6. Glue the squares onto the matrix in the correct order.

- Remind parents that developmental charts are just approximations of when toddlers start to work on different skills and behaviors. Every toddler is unique so variation among toddlers is common.

- Explain that toddlers’ emerging skills and behaviors will affect how toddlers approach food. This will affect what we serve, how we serve it and what table manners we can expect from toddlers.

- Explain that choking is a safety hazard related to toddlers’ developmental stages. For example, toys with small pieces usually include a warning that the toy is not appropriate for toddlers under three years of age because young toddlers put these small pieces in their mouths and can easily choke on them.
• Show the parents a cardboard tube with a 1 1/2 inch opening, such as a tube from an empty role of toilet paper or paper towels. Explain that this represents the size of a toddler’s mouth. Anything that fits in this tube opening would also fit in a toddler’s mouth and could cause choking. Of course, one reason for having a mouth is to eat and that means putting food in our mouths! Foods that are the most likely to cause choking are small enough for toddlers to get in their mouths, but larger than the size of their throats.

• Tell the parents that a child’s throat is about the size of the toddler’s pinky finger. Show them a straw with an opening about the same size. Demonstrate how a few sample foods fit through the tube with the larger opening, “a toddler’s mouth,” but would not fit through the straw, “a toddler’s throat.”

• Ask participants to identify foods or other items that could easily cause choking in a young child [examples are popcorn, hard candy, whole grapes, hot dogs, baby carrots].

Discuss ways to reduce the chances of a toddler choking, including:

• Give food that is cut into very small pieces and that is not difficult for toddlers to chew.

• Avoid items such as popcorn, hard candy, whole grapes, etc.

• Make sure that the toddler is seated while eating all meals and snacks.

• Make sure that an adult or responsible caregiver is watching the child while she eats.

• Do not feed toddlers in the car while someone is driving.

Explain that choking isn’t the only food safety issue related to child development. It is important for adults and children to wash their hands to prevent illness. Give an example of a time that you should wash your hands, such as after changing a diaper. Then ask the parents, “What are other times that people should wash their hands?” Compliment them on the examples that they give. Add more examples if the following times are not mentioned — after using the restroom, before eating or preparing food, after handling raw meat, after touching pets. Explain that experts recommend that we rub our hands together with soap and water for at least 20 seconds to thoroughly wash our hands.

Discuss child development in relation to hand washing. For example, young children need help from adults to learn to thoroughly wash their hands. In addition, adults are role models for children even with hand washing.
Parents help toddlers learn healthy eating habits. Explain that a good way for toddlers to learn healthy eating habits is by parents providing healthy meals and snacks and letting their child decide how much to eat. Explain that parents are responsible for providing regular meals and snacks, and a variety of foods. Toddlers are responsible for deciding what to eat and how much to eat. Share the following examples with parents and ask them if the parent in each scenario is applying the “parent provides, child decides” principle.

**Scenario A:** When Rosie and her daughter, Lydia, sit down for a meal, Rosie puts a little chicken, rice, cooked carrots and applesauce on Lydia’s plate. Lydia eats the chicken and applesauce, but only tastes the carrots and rice. When the meal is over, Rosie cleans up Lydia’s messy fingers and face, and lets her leave the table to play.

Ask the parents, “Did Rosie apply the “parent provides, child decides” principle?” [Answer: Yes. She offered Lydia a variety of foods at a meal and let Lydia decide how much to eat.]

**Scenario B:** Jackie thinks her son, Joe, is too small and wants him to eat more. At dinner, Jackie puts some spaghetti, a piece of bread and greens on Joe’s plate. Joe takes a few bites of his greens and spaghetti. Since Jackie wants Joe to eat more, she tries to get Joe to eat more of the food on Joe’s plate by promising him a cookie if he eats all his greens.

Ask the parents, “Did Jackie apply the “parent provides, child decides” principle?” [Answer: Yes and no. She did serve Joe a variety of foods at a meal, but she didn’t let Joe decide how much to eat.]

NOTE: If a parent is concerned about a child’s weight, encourage the parent to talk to her child’s doctor or health care provider.
Parents are responsible for turning the TV off during meals, too. Experts recommend that the TV be off during meals so a family can focus on enjoying their food and talking to one another.

Another way for parents to encourage toddlers to eat a variety of healthy foods is to let them help prepare foods. Discuss ways that small children can help prepare foods. Point out that a one-year-old child might be able to put crackers on a plate. Ask the parents for example of things their toddlers do. Compliment them on the ways they encourage their toddlers to be involved in preparing food or other activities.

[If toddlers are available for the latter part of the lesson, do the following food preparation and sampling activity with adults and toddlers. If toddlers are not available, do just the food preparation and tasting portion of the following activity. Adjust wording to fit your situation.]

Explain to parents that it’s almost time to have a snack with their toddlers. Each parent will sit at one of the “tables” with her toddler for the snack. Encourage parents to find out what their toddlers were doing while the parents were in this class and/or visit with their children. Give each parent a recipe, dry ingredients, and supplies to make Cereal Mix. Explain that their toddler will be coming in and helping them mix the ingredients in the closed bag — since this is a skill most toddlers can perform.

Have the parents wash their hands. Before the toddlers come in, have the parents “set the tables” with paper plates. Pour small glasses of milk for the toddlers and larger glasses of milk for adults. Keep the filled glasses of milk on a table where they are least likely to be spilled until it is time to eat the Cereal Mix and drink the milk. Explain to the parents that toddlers are messy eaters.

Paper towels are available to help the parents clean up their toddler as well as the area around their toddler after they eat. Invite the toddlers to join their parents for the snack. Have the parents help their toddlers wash their hands before eating. Then have the parents put the ingredients into the bag and close it. Have the toddlers shake the bag to mix the ingredients. Encourage everyone to sit together to taste the recipe.

After the snack, have the parents help clean up. Thank them for coming and let them know that you look forward to seeing them next week.
### Toddler and Preschool Development Matrix

**Participant Handout**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>ONE'S</th>
<th>AGE #2</th>
<th>THREE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
# Toddler and Preschooler Development Squares

Print Development Squares handouts back to back and cut out inside squares for the Development Matrix game.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Curious – Watches and Explores</th>
<th>Short attention span—watches many things</th>
<th>Longer attention span—more social</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Uses fingers to feed self</td>
<td>Can use spoon and cup fairly well</td>
<td>Able to pour and serve—likes to help</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Doesn’t like new situations</td>
<td>Independent—often says “no!”</td>
<td>Likes many choices</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Eating often slows down</td>
<td>May have food jags (picky eater)</td>
<td>Has food preferences (i.e. no mixed foods)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Says two or three words</td>
<td>Says short phrases—“more juice”</td>
<td>Good at conversation</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Toddler and Preschooler Development Squares (side 2)
back of handout

Print Development Squares handouts back to back and cut out inside squares for the Development Matrix game.

T A O
H G N
R E(2) E(1)
E # '
E 2 S
Cereal Mix Recipe

Ingredients

¼ cup of each of the following:

• Cheerios cereal

• Corn Chex cereal

• Cheese-flavored crackers (such as Cheese Nips)

One Colby-Jack cheese stick, cut in to ~ 7 pieces

Directions

Measure all ingredients into sealable plastic bag.

Shake until mixed. Enjoy!
Lesson

Mealtimes: Managing Mini or Mighty Appetites
Mealtimes: Managing Mini or Mighty Appetites and Messes

Objective

By the end of the lesson, parents will have:

1. Identified foods in each of the food groups on the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) MyPyramid.

2. Generated strategies for incorporating a variety of foods into their toddler’s diets.

3. Discussed developmental stages and common mealtime behaviors in relation to the following recommended mealtime practices for feeding toddlers:
   - Provide meals in a pleasant social environment.
   - Establish regular mealtimes.
   - Have child sit while eating.
   - Permit child to decide if and how much to eat.
   - Offer a variety of foods, especially fruits and vegetables.
   - Offer new foods many times.

4. Discussed strategies for introducing new foods to a child.

If toddlers are available for the latter part of the lesson, add these objectives.

5. Practiced strategies for introducing a new food to a child.

6. Spent time sitting, eating and talking with their young toddlers.

Motivation:
Learn about the variety of foods your toddlers need and strategies for introducing foods to them.
Lesson • Managing Mini or Mighty Appetites and Messes

Materials needed

- Food models in both child- and adult-size portions for buffet activity (from local dairy councils)
- 4 paper plates for buffet activity
- Handout with information on suggested amounts to serve toddlers (master copy included)
- Toddler and Preschooler Mealtime Management (master copy included, 3 pages)
- Newsprint and marker
- Plastic knife for adults to cut fruit
- Cutting board
- Vanilla yogurt
- Crushed pineapple (optional)
- Spoon
- Small bowl
- Bananas and grapes
- Colander
- Paper plates
- Plastic utensils
- Paper towels

If toddlers are available for the latter part of the lesson, add these items:

- Clean beach towels or blankets for “tables” on the floor
- Highchairs or boosters seats for toddlers who might need them (12-18 months old)

Before the lesson

- Put food models out on a table.
- Copy handouts for parents.
Lesson • Managing Mini or Mighty Appetites and Messes

Doing the lesson

• Welcome the parents. Ask parents if they used their matrixes from the previous class (as appropriate), and what stages of development they noticed in their toddlers in the past week.

• To introduce today’s topic, explain that during this class, we will focus on feeding young toddlers. Divide parents up so that two or three people work together. Then have each pair or small group select either a breakfast, lunch, dinner or snack for a child between the ages of 1 and 3 years using the food models that are spread out on the table. If class size is very small, each pair or small group could select more than one meal/snack. Give parents a few minutes to select their meal or snack. Once each pair/small group has selected their meal or snack, have them put the plates on the table at the front of the room. Use these meals and snacks to look at an entire day of food for the child. Ask parents, “Does this collection of meals and snacks look like a day of food that your toddlers would eat?”

• Explain that it is important for toddlers and adults to eat a variety of foods from the five food groups. Remind parents that it is an adult’s responsibility to offer a variety of foods to toddlers. Then, go back to the meals and snacks selected, and encourage parents to divide all of the foods into the different food groups.

• Once parents are aware of which food groups are represented, ask: What changes would you suggest making to get foods from all the food groups into this day’s worth of meals and snacks?

Ideas that might be suggested are:

• Being sure to serve foods from at least three food groups at each meal.

• Planning meals and snacks for a day and checking to be sure all food groups are represented.

• Including a fruit, vegetable or both at each meal.

Point out that a child’s stomach is about the size of one of his/her fists. Therefore, toddlers don’t eat as much as adults. Use models such as rubber food models, measuring cups, and plates or bowls with a measured amount of dry beans, cereal or rice to show how they look on a plate or in a bowl.
Then, encourage parents to look at the portion of each food in the meals and snacks selected. Ask parents, “Which foods do you think might be about the right size for a toddler? Are there any portions that you think are too large or too small?”

Be sure to emphasize that the serving sizes on the handout are guidelines and toddlers might eat more or less, depending on how hungry they are. Toddlers’ appetites fluctuate from day to day depending on many things such as their activity levels, whether or not they are in a growth spurt, how tired or excited they might be, and/or if they are sick. Also, 1 to 2 year old toddlers need even less than 3 to 5 year old toddlers. Remind parents that it is the child’s responsibility to decide how much to eat.

• Encourage parents to limit the total amount of fruit juice that toddlers drink. If toddlers drink a lot of fruit juice, they will not be hungry for foods from all the food groups. You might serve a toddler juice in a cup for one snack or at a meal. Give your toddlers water in between meals to quench their thirst.

As a transition, ask parents, “Do your toddlers always eat the foods you serve?” Remind parents that not eating everything that is served, being hesitant to try new foods and being a picky eater are normal childhood behaviors.
Distribute the “Toddler and Preschooler Mealtime Management” handout (3 pages). Discuss the contents of the handout. [Focus on the most popular ages of parents’ toddlers if time does not permit covering all ages.]

• Talk about how development is related to common mealtime behaviors.

• Ask parents if these behaviors are typical of their toddlers and if so, how have they handled them.

• Discuss the techniques listed in the third column of mealtime management.

• Encourage the group to identify and list additional mealtime strategies in the fourth column.

Explain that one question many parents ask is, “How can I get my child to try new foods?” One suggestion on the mealtime management was to offer a new food up to 20 times. Ask parents, “What other suggestions do you have for encouraging toddlers to try new foods?” Include suggestions of your own. Suggestions might include:

• Serve meals and snacks at regular times. Healthy snacks are important for toddlers, but snacking on foods or drinking juice throughout the day interferes with a child’s appetite at mealtime.

• Snacks should be midway between meals and no less than two hours before a meal so that toddlers are hungry at meal times.

• Offer familiar foods that a child likes when offering a new food. Give the child just a small amount of the new food, but don’t insist that she eat all of it, only that she taste it.

• Try the new food yourself to be a positive role model.

• Encourage other family members not to make negative comments about the food.

• Offer the new food when you know that the child is hungry.

[If toddlers are available for the latter part of the lesson, do the following food preparation and sampling activity with adults and toddlers. If toddlers are not available, do just the food preparation and tasting portion of the following activity. Adjust wording to fit your situation.]
Before the toddlers join the adults, tell parents what they will be making for the snack today — fresh fruit pieces with dip made from vanilla yogurt and crushed pineapple. Ask them which tasks, if any, their toddlers might be able to do. For example, a 1-year-old might be able to put the fruit pieces onto a paper plate, a 2-year-old might be able to stir the crushed pineapple into the yogurt in the bowl, and a 3-year-old might be able to peel a banana and rinse the grapes.

Have toddlers join the adults to prepare the snack. Encourage parents to help their toddlers wash their hands before preparing the snack. Then have adults work with their toddlers to prepare the snack. Have paper towels available so adults clean up their toddlers and the preparation area.

Once the snack is prepared, have adults and toddlers sit together to eat it.

After the snack, have parents help clean up. Thank them for coming and let them know that you look forward to seeing them next week.
Suggested Amounts to Serve Toddlers

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Components</th>
<th>Household Measurement</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Lean meat, poultry, fish</td>
<td>1 oz</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Egg</td>
<td>1/2 of an egg</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cooked dry beans/peas</td>
<td>1/4 cup</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vegetables/Fruits, includes juice</td>
<td>1/4 cup or 2 fluid ounces</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grains/Breads</td>
<td>1/2 slice of bread</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cereal</td>
<td>1/4 cup</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Milk &amp; Yogurt</td>
<td>1/2 cup or 4 fluid ounces</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cheese</td>
<td>1 ounce or about 1 slice American cheese</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: United States Department of Agriculture at [http://www.fns.usda.gov/cnd/care/ProgramBasics/Meals](http://www.fns.usda.gov/cnd/care/ProgramBasics/Meals)

It is important to offer toddlers a variety of foods every day and to allow them to choose what they want to eat from those foods. When introducing new foods to your toddler, you may offer as little as 1 Teaspoon of the new food.
# Toddler and Preschooler Mealtime Management

## The One-Year-Old Child (12-24 months)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Child’s Developmental Stage</th>
<th>Common Mealtime Behaviors</th>
<th>Caregiver’s Mealtime Strategies</th>
<th>More Strategies</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Curious — Watches and explores</td>
<td>May dump or throw food to see what happens.</td>
<td>Set positive limits at the table, such as “Put the food in your mouth.”</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Uses fingers to feed self</td>
<td>May make a mess or be viewed as playing with food.</td>
<td>Allow for messy meal-times by having surfaces that you are able to clean. Provide many finger foods. Have the child sit at the table while eating.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Doesn’t like new situations</td>
<td>May be afraid of new foods or new meal-related situations.</td>
<td>Offer a new food up to 20 times without fuss. Add new foods into family meals. Have regular mealtimes and snacks.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Eating often slows down</td>
<td>May not eat as much or as often as before and is easily distracted.</td>
<td>Serve small portions. Allow the child to decide if and how much food he or she would like to eat. Have the child sit at the table while eating. Do not allow the child to remove food from the table to eat. Permit the child to leave the table when he or she is full. Turn off the TV during meals.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Says two or three words</td>
<td>Can’t tell you about food likes.</td>
<td>Watch your child’s face and body to see what he or she wants. Eat and talk with your child. Make mealtimes pleasant.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
# Toddler and Preschooler Mealtime Management

## The Two-Year-Old Child (24-36 months)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Child’s Developmental Stage</th>
<th>Common Mealtime Behaviors</th>
<th>Caregiver’s Mealtime Strategies</th>
<th>More Strategies</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Short attention span—watches many things</td>
<td>May not eat if distracted. Often wants to leave the table shortly after sitting down. Has a hard time waiting for food if hungry.</td>
<td>Turn off the TV during meals. Plan meals and snacks at regular times during the day. Make mealtimes a pleasant, social experience. Have the child sit at the table while eating. Do not allow the child to remove food from the table to eat. Permit the child to leave the table when he or she is full.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Can use spoon and cup fairly well</td>
<td>Has better use of spoons, forks, and cups, but still may be a messy eater. Has trouble pouring and cutting.</td>
<td>Provide small spoons, forks, and cups that won’t break. Fill cups half full or less. Expect messiness during mealtimes.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Independent—often says “no!”</td>
<td>May refuse food.</td>
<td>Allow your child to decide if and how much food to eat. Avoid power struggles. Continue to offer new foods and encourage tasting.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>May have food jags (picky eater)</td>
<td>Children often go through times when they only eat one type of food. For example, they may want only bread and butter for a couple of days, then just fruit and cheese for a time.</td>
<td>Do not worry, if the child is growing. Offer many nutritious foods and allow the child to select what to eat. Do not prepare special foods for the child.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Says short phrases—“more juice”</td>
<td>Able to talk a little better, but still has some trouble.</td>
<td>Watch your child’s face and body to see what he or she wants.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
# Toddler and Preschooler Mealtime Management

## The Three-Year-Old Child (36-48 months)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Child’s Developmental Stage</th>
<th>Common Mealtime Behaviors</th>
<th>Caregiver’s Mealtime Strategies</th>
<th>More Strategies</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Longer attention span—more social</td>
<td>Can sit longer.</td>
<td>Eat and talk with your child during meals. Have your child sit at the table while eating. Do not allow him or her to remove food from the table to eat.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Able to pour and serve—likes to help</td>
<td>Can help make meals and snacks.</td>
<td>Let your child help with simple, safe cooking and serving of food.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Likes many choices</td>
<td>Enjoys many foods.</td>
<td>Serve many foods during meals and snacks, especially new vegetables. Offer new foods many times.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Has food preferences</td>
<td>May have specific food “rules”, such as no food touching, no mixed foods, no lumpy foods, etc.</td>
<td>Allow the child to decide if and how much he or she would like to eat. Let your child eat foods in any order or combination. Do not use dessert as a reward.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Good at conversation</td>
<td>Can talk about food likes and dislikes. Can add to pleasant conversations at mealtimes.</td>
<td>Talk about foods and meals together. Keep mealtimes enjoyable. Have regular meals and snacks. Turn the TV off during meals.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Lesson

Managing Mealtimes: A “PLAN”
Managing Mealtimes: A “PLAN”

Objective

By the end of the lesson, parents will have:

1. Discussed positive discipline techniques.

2. Applied positive discipline techniques to common mealt ime behaviors.

If toddlers are available for the latter part of the lesson, add these objectives:

3. Discussed the importance of healthy snacks for toddlers.

4. Spent time sitting, eating and talking with their young children.

Materials needed

- Newsprint and marker
- PLAN handout (participant handout — master copy included)
- PLAN scenario worksheet (participant handout)
- PLAN scenario worksheet (instructor’s version with answers — master copy included)
- Ingredients and supplies to prepare mini pizzas (master copy of recipe included)
- Paper plates
- Plastic knives to cut finished pizzas into bite-size pieces for toddlers
- Paper towels

If toddlers are available for the latter part of the lesson, add these items:

- Clean beach towels or blankets for “tables” on the floor.

Before the lesson

- Make copies of the PLAN handouts and worksheets
Lesson • Managing Mealtimes: A “PLAN”

Doing the lesson

- Welcome participants. Ask them if they used any of the information from previous classes (as appropriate) when feeding their toddlers this week and, if so, encourage them to share their experiences.

- If key points from the previous lessons did not come up in the introductory discussion, review them by asking questions such as the following.
  - “What kinds of foods should you feed your toddlers?” Answer probing for: a variety of foods from the five food groups.
  - “If a toddler is using her fingers to feed herself, how should you respond?” Answer probing for: It depends upon the toddler’s stage of development. It is OK for toddlers to feed themselves using their fingers. Encourage toddlers to use a spoon to practice this skill, but it takes time to learn.
  - “Who decides how much a toddler should eat?” Answer probing for: The toddler. Adults should not force children to eat.

Acknowledge that it can be very frustrating when a child does not want to eat or seems to only eat a limited number of foods. However, it is important to understand that this is normal child behavior and getting upset about it will not change things.

- Distribute copies of the PLAN AHEAD handouts with the stop sign on them. Introduce PLAN techniques.

Objectives 1–2: 30 minutes

- Distribute the PLAN scenario worksheet. Read each situation and have the participants suggest appropriate ways to deal with each scenario. Participants may want to refer back to the “Toddler and Preschooler Mealtime Management” handout for ideas. For the last scenario, encourage participants to talk about actual situations that they may be dealing with. Encourage the group to think of ways to handle the situations mentioned, using the PLAN approach.

As a transition, ask participants: “How could you use the PLAN approach when giving your toddler a snack?”

Answers might include:
  - Prevent – serve snacks at a regular time each day when your toddler will be hungry but not tired;
  - Limits – have toddler sit while eating the snack;
  - Accept – that toddler might spill milk or get clothes messy with banana slices;
  - New Expectation or Behavior – don’t worry if toddler doesn’t eat a snack.
Explain that healthy snacks are important in a toddler’s diet because children need energy and nutrients throughout the day and the time between meals is often more than 4 or 5 hours. Discuss ideas for healthy snacks that participants might serve their toddlers. For example, one person might serve her toddler milk and a graham cracker for a snack. Encourage participants to identify snacks from the five food groups. Write these snack ideas on newsprint. Encourage participants to incorporate food groups from which children typically don’t eat enough such as fruit, vegetables and milk into snacks.

[If toddlers are available for the latter part of the lesson, do the following food preparation and sampling activity with adults and toddlers. If toddlers are not available, do just the food preparation and tasting portion of the following activity. Adjust wording to fit your situation.]

Introduce today’s snack by telling participants that a mini pizza is a quick and healthy snack. Have participants wash their hands and begin preparing the mini pizzas. Discuss what food groups are represented on the pizzas. While the pizzas are baking, have participants set the tables and help their children wash their hands. Have participants serve their children a pizza, cutting it into bite-size pieces if necessary, and sit and eat with their children. Encourage them to communicate with their children while eating together.

After the snack, have participants help clean up. Give each of them a small incentive to take home. Thank them for coming and let them know that you look forward to seeing them next week.
# Plan Scenario Worksheet

**Instructor Copy**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>SITUATION</th>
<th>P: Prevent meal-time behavior problems</th>
<th>L: Set positive limits – Set limits that are reasonable, specific, enforceable and consistent and enforce them. Limits are used to protect the child, other people, and property from being hurt or destroyed.</th>
<th>A: Accept the behavior – Accept behaviors that are developmentally appropriate and follow the child’s lead.</th>
<th>N: New expectation or behavior.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Little Latasha is one year old and makes a terrible mess at mealtime. She plays in her food and even throws it at times. She wants to feed herself, but gets food all over herself.</td>
<td>Use surfaces (table and floor) that are easy to clean. Provide many finger foods. Have Latasha sit while eating.</td>
<td>Tell Latasha not to throw any food. Food goes in the mouth.</td>
<td>Acknowledge that feeding skills are just emerging and that messiness is normal.</td>
<td>Enjoy your child’s new skills in the area of self-feeding. Make mealtimes a fun experience.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ramon is two and has only wanted to eat peanut butter and jelly sandwiches for the past several weeks. His mother tries to get him to eat different food, but he refuses. If she insists that he eat something different he throws a temper tantrum and will not eat anything.</td>
<td>Offer Ramon many nutritious foods, including the food that he likes. Allow Ramon to select what to eat.</td>
<td>Tell Ramon that he cannot hurt himself, other people or property when he is upset. During temper tantrums have Ramon leave the table. Do not allow Ramon to remove food from the table to eat. Remain calm.</td>
<td>Acknowledge that “food jags” are normal and that over time children will usually choose a balanced diet when they are offered a variety of foods. Children at this time are learning independence and it often shows up in eating preferences.</td>
<td>Pay attention to Ramon’s food preferences and allow him to choose if and how much food he would like to eat. Do not worry about Ramon’s food choices, as long as he is still growing.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maria is three years old and is picky about how her food is served. She does not want any of her food touching. If food should happen to touch she throws a fit and disrupts the meal.</td>
<td>Pay attention to Maria’s food rules and serve food in the manner that she prefers.</td>
<td>Tell Maria that “throwing a fit” at mealtimes is not acceptable and she may leave the table if she is not able to eat. Do not allow Maria to remove food from the table to eat. Do not use dessert as a reward for eating.</td>
<td>Acknowledge that “food rules” are normal behavior for preschoolers. They are learning about order and decisions.</td>
<td>Allow Maria to eat her food in the manner and order that she prefers, as long as it is in the context of normal meals and snacks.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(Fill in your own situations and discuss options for resolving mealtime behavior problems.)

Plan Scenario Worksheet

Participant Handout

**SITUATION**

**P**revent mealtime behavior problems

**L**set positive limits — Set limits that are reasonable, specific, enforceable and consistent and enforce them. Limits are used to protect the child, other people, and property from being hurt or destroyed.

**A**ccept the behavior — Accept behaviors that are developmentally appropriate and follow the child’s lead.

**N**ew expectation or behavior.

Little Latasha is one year old and makes a terrible mess at mealtime. She plays in her food and even throws it at times. She wants to feed herself, but gets food all over herself.

Ramon is two and has only wanted to eat peanut butter and jelly sandwiches for the past several weeks. His mother tries to get him to eat different food, but he refuses. If she insists that he eat something different he throws a temper tantrum and will not eat anything.

Maria is three years old and is picky about how her food is served. She does not want any of her food touching. If food should happen to touch she throws a fit and disrupts the meal.

(Fill in your own situations and discuss options for resolving mealtime behavior problems.)

P.L.A.N. Ahead for Mealtime Behavior Problems

Participant Handout

Prevent mealtime behavior problems.

Limits — Set positive limits that are reasonable, specific, enforceable and consistent. Limits are used to protect the child, other people, and property from being hurt or destroyed.

Accept — Accept behaviors that are developmentally appropriate.

New expectation or behavior — Modify expectations or behaviors to meet developmental needs.

Mini Pizzas!

Ingredients

1 package pre-made mini pizza crusts
1 can pizza sauce or tomato paste
Shredded mozzarella cheese
Your favorite toppings, such as:

- Pepperoni
- Sliced green pepper
- Pineapple chunks
- Lunchmeat, cut into small squares
- Black olives, sliced

Directions

Preheat oven to 400°F. Place pizza crusts on a cookie sheet and spread a thin layer of tomato paste or pizza sauce on each one. Sprinkle shredded mozzarella cheese on top, until pizza sauce is covered. Decorate with your favorite toppings … you can arrange the toppings to make a fun pattern or even a funny face! Place mini pizzas in the oven for 12-15 minutes. Let cool slightly, and ENJOY!
Lesson

Tailoring Meals for Tots and Time
Tailoring Meals for Tots and Time

Objective

By the end of the lesson, parents will have:

1. Discussed strategies for making healthier choices when selecting food away from home.
2. Identified strategies to save time in food preparation.
3. Discussed ideas for quick and easy meals.
4. Discussed strategies for keeping toddlers occupied while an adult is preparing a meal.
5. Identified key components of a positive family eating situation.
6. Distinguished between positive and negative eating situations.
7. Practiced preparing a quick and easy meal.

If toddlers are available for the latter part of the lesson, add this objective

8. Spent time sitting, eating and talking with their toddlers.

Motivation:
Do you find that you are often short on time? Today we will talk about making healthier choices when eating out and timesaving tips.
Materials needed

- A sample kid’s meal from a local fast food restaurant or foods/food models to represent this meal
- Newsprint and marker
- Quick and Easy Meals handout (master copy included)
- Ingredients and supplies for assembling Create a Casserole recipe to send home as a “planned over” for parents (master copy of recipe included)
- Equipment to prepare Create a Casserole (optional — only need if you decide to prepare the recipe in class)
- One Create a Casserole for parents and their toddlers to sample
- Paper plates
- Plastic utensils
- Paper towels
- Resealable plastic bags or storage containers for parents
- Clean beach towels or blankets for “tables” on the floor

Before the lesson

- Make copies of handouts for parents
- Make one Create a Casserole recipe for parents and toddlers to try
- Make copies of Parent Evaluation – Class Lessons (found in supplemental materials)
Doing the lesson

Welcome parents. Ask them if they used any of the PLAN techniques that were discussed last week (as appropriate). Encourage them to share with the rest of the group how they might have used these techniques.

As a transition, let parents know that you realize dealing with toddler behaviors is not the only thing that can be stressful. Not having enough time to do the things we want or need to do is another stressor we face. In today’s society we often grab a quick meal from a fast food restaurant.

Show parents the kid’s meal from the fast food restaurant. Tell them that eating a meal from a fast food restaurant once in a while isn’t a problem, but it is hard to get all the foods we need from fast food restaurants. Ask parents, “What kinds of foods seem to be missing from this fast food meal?” In many cases, fast food meals for kids are missing fruit and milk, and the only vegetables available are French fries.

Ask parents what suggestions they have for making this fast food meal healthier. Add suggestions of your own if desired. Ideas might be:

- Choose milk in place of soda pop.
- Let toddlers choose between two foods that are healthier selections rather than giving them the option to choose anything from the menu. For example ask, “Would you like milk or orange juice to drink?”
- If having this meal for lunch or dinner, be sure to include fruits, vegetables, milk and/or other food groups missing at other meals and snacks that day.

Continue by discussing the fact that even though we consider feeding our families healthy meals important, many things seem to compete for our time and energy to prepare meals. Ask parents what suggestions they have for saving time in food preparation. Suggestions might include: planning ahead for leftovers; planning quick and easy meals for days that you anticipate will be busy; and preparing some items ahead of time.

Next, ask parents what ideas they might have for quick and easy meals. Record the ideas on newsprint. Add suggestions of your own. Distribute copies of the Quick and Easy Meals handout.
Distribute copies of the recipe for Create a Casserole. Discuss how it fits with the suggestions that have been discussed. Explain that we will taste this recipe later. [If you are preparing the casserole in class, begin preparing the rice, noodles or macaroni.]

Objective 4: 10 minutes

It’s often hard to prepare food when young toddlers are around. Ask parents what suggestions they might have for keeping young toddlers occupied when they don’t have time to get them involved or there aren’t things that are appropriate for them to do. Encourage them to consider toddler development discussed in earlier lessons. Add suggestions of your own. Suggestions might include:

- Having a cabinet or one area of the kitchen that has unbreakable pans, bowls and spoons that toddlers might use to mimic your food preparation.
- Having toddler-appropriate magnets on the lower level of the refrigerator, books or other toys with which toddlers could play.
- Talking to your toddler, possibly explaining what you are doing, while preparing food.

Objectives 5–6: 10 minutes

We found that most parents want to sit down with their toddlers and have a pleasant family mealtime. Explain to parents that involving toddlers in preparing food or just talking to them when you are preparing food is a way to get a positive start. Ask parents for other suggestions to keep meal times positive. Add suggestions of your own. Be sure to include:

- Sit down together for a meal, even if it’s on a blanket on the floor picnic-style.
- Reduce distractions — turn off the TV.
- Have plates, cups and utensils that are the appropriate size for toddlers so that they don’t get frustrated trying to eat.
- Keep the atmosphere positive with pleasant conversation — don’t get upset if a toddler creates a mess or spills milk because toddlers are messy as they learn new skills.
• Avoid forcing toddlers to eat or other struggles over food — if a toddler becomes disruptive, have them leave the table.

Explain that it’s time to get ready for our family meal. Have parents wash their hands and work together to assemble Create a Casserole ingredients for the “planned over.” [Or finish the casserole if preparing it in class.]

[If toddlers are available for the latter part of the lesson, do the following food preparation and sampling activity with adults and toddlers. If toddlers are not available, do just the food preparation and tasting portion of the following activity. Adjust wording to fit your situation.]

Have parents set the “tables.” Have parents help their toddlers wash their hands before sitting down to sample the Create a Casserole recipe that was prepared before/during the class. Encourage families to share a pleasant meal with one another.

After eating, have parents help clean up. Give them the assembled ingredients for the “planned over.” Encourage them to complete a short evaluation of the lessons and collect these evaluations. Thank them for participating in the program.
Quick and Easy Meals

"Bake" potatoes in a microwave oven and top with:

- Leftover chili
- Salsa, chopped onion and low-fat cheese
- Chopped broccoli with low-fat, shredded cheese

Serve with a whole-grain bread or a roll and low-fat milk.

Microwave instructions
Scrub a medium potato and pierce with a fork. Place on a paper towel. Microwave on high power 4 to 6 minutes, turning once. Let stand for 2 minutes. Baking time varies, depending on the microwave and the potato. Add 2 to 3 minutes for each additional potato.

Top salad greens with a variety of foods for a colorful, tasty meal.

Suggested toppings

- Broccoli or cauliflower flowerets
- Chopped or shredded carrots, red cabbage, summer squash, onion or jicama
- Sliced tomato, radishes, cooked beets or peppers
- Slices of apple, grapes, oranges or melon
- Sesame or sunflower seeds
- Cooked dry beans such as garbanzo or kidney beans
- Hard-cooked egg slices
- Canned, cooked or leftover meats such as tuna, chicken or ham
- Shredded or grated cheese
- Yogurt or cottage cheese

Serve with a cup of soup and crackers.

Adapted with permission from Eating Right is Basic – Enhanced, copyright Michigan State University Extension, 2001.
Create a Casserole

Create a tasty casserole from simple ingredients. Just choose an item from each of the columns and follow the directions. Each casserole serves 4 adults.

Rice, Noodles or Macaroni

**Step 1:** Choose rice, noodles or macaroni.

**Rice**
- 2 cups water
- 1 cup rice

Combine rice and cold water. Bring to a boil. Then turn heat to low and cover pan with a lid. Simmer until water is absorbed, about 20 minutes.

**Noodles or Macaroni**
- 6 cups water
- 2 cups noodles or macaroni

Heat water until boiling. Stir in noodles or macaroni. Cook until tender, about 10 minutes. Drain.

Meat or Fish

**Step 2:** Choose one of these meats.
- 1 can tuna (9- or 12-ounce size), drained
- 1½ cups cooked or canned meat
- 1 pound ground meat, cooked

Sauce

**Step 3:** Mix ¼ cup milk with one can (10-ounce size) soup. You could use tomato, cream of mushroom, cream of celery or cream of chicken soup.

Or, use 1½ cups white sauce.

**White Sauce**
- 1 ½ tablespoons margarine
- 3 tablespoons flour
- 1 ½ cups milk
- ¾ teaspoon salt
- Dash of pepper

1. Melt margarine in a saucepan. Mix in flour to make a smooth paste.
2. Slowly add milk. Cook over low heat, stirring constantly until thick.
3. Add salt and pepper. Cook 3 minutes longer.

Adapted with permission from Eating Right is Basic – Enhanced, copyright Michigan State University Extension, 2001.
Create a Casserole

Create a tasty casserole from simple ingredients. Just choose an item from each of the columns and follow the directions. Each casserole serves 4 adults.

**Vegetables**

**Step 4:** Choose one or more of these vegetables for seasoning.

- 1/2 cup chopped onion, celery, or green pepper

Cook these vegetables in a small amount of water until tender.

You might also want to add some of your favorite herbs and spices to your casserole.

**Vegetables for Seasoning**

**Step 5:** Choose one of these vegetables.

- Broccoli
- Carrots
- Corn
- Green beans
- Lima beans
- Mixed vegetables

You will need:
- 2 cups cooked vegetables.
- Use either 1 can (16 oz. size) drained, or 1 box (10 1/2 oz. size), or 2 cups frozen, cooked

**Crunch**

Cracker or toast crumbs
Dry cereal crumbs

You will need about 2 tablespoons of crumbs.

**Directions**

**Step 6:**

1. For Baking in the Oven.

Grease a baking dish. Put rice, noodles, or macaroni in the dish. Top with meat, seasonings, vegetables, and sauce. Sprinkle crumbs on top of the casserole. Bake at 350 degrees until bubbly (about 20 minutes).

2. For cooking on top of the stove.

Put all of the ingredients (except the crumbs) into a saucepan or skillet. Heat and stir for about 10 minutes. Add more milk if it gets dry. Pour into a serving dish and top with crumbs.

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Reinforcing Activities
Developmental Stages of Toddlers

Objective
The parent/caregiver will give examples of his/her toddler’s stage of development for each of the four stages of development areas (talking, independence, playing and short attention span).

Introducing the NEAT Reinforcing Activities

- Greet the parent and explain that over the next couple of months you would like to take about 10 minutes of each visit to talk about healthy eating. Explain that this discussion will give her an opportunity to focus on her toddler and any questions or concerns she might have about feeding her toddler.

Introducing this activity

Ask the parent, “How would you describe your toddler’s current stages of development when it comes to eating?” (LISTEN and OBSERVE)

Validate and reinforce the parent’s response. (VALIDATE) Then briefly elaborate on the key point for this developmental stage (listed at the end of the activity). For example, if the parent states that her toddler is starting to say “no” to foods, then you might say, “It can be a challenge when toddlers start to be independent! They certainly show their likes and dislikes, especially when it comes to food.”

Reinforcing activity

Use the parent’s response to start filling in the TIPS sheet. After going over the example, ask the parent to describe examples of where her toddler might be in the other three areas and fill in the worksheet. Be sure to compliment the parent on the things she is doing to help her toddler through these stages of development. Then spend a few minutes discussing and offering suggestions for helping the parent if she is dealing with any challenging eating situations.

Closing

- Ask the parent if she has any questions.
- Assist her with any questions or concerns she might have.
- Compliment the parent for working with her toddler on this important topic.
Reinforcing Activity for the coming week: (EMPOWERING)

• Ask the parent if there is something related to eating that she would like to work on with her toddler this week.

• If yes, then complete “My NEAT Plan for Mealtime” refrigerator card with the parent and put it on the refrigerator with a magnet or tape.

Materials needed

☐ TIPS activity sheet

☐ “My NEAT Plan for Mealtime” refrigerator card (master copy included)

☐ Magnet or tape

Supplemental Materials Available

☐ Ways to Encourage Self-Feeding Handout

☐ Tips on Child Development Handout & Instructor Copy
For the Instructor: Key Points About the Four Developmental Stages

**T** (Talking) – The key point for this stage is that the toddler is learning to manage her behavior by telling the parent what and how much she would like to eat.

- Remember that it is the parent’s responsibility to provide a variety of healthy foods, but the child’s responsibility to decide how much to eat.
- Toddlers also are learning words for foods and words such as “mine”. As toddlers get older they begin to say short phrases and sentences. A child’s developing language skills can help a caregiver know what and how much the child wants to eat for meals and snacks.

**I** (Independence) – The key point for this stage is that the toddler is learning to manage her behavior by acting independently.

- Toddlers tend to be very independent. They are at the “do it myself stage.”
- As they get older they want to feed and serve themselves. Even though this can be messy, it is good to let them do as much as they are able to do so they develop their skills and gain confidence, and reduce mealtime frustration.
- Another way toddlers show their independence is by being “picky eaters.” Toddlers might refuse food because they do not want to try a new food or want to eat the same food over and over. This is a normal and important stage of development because children learn decision-making by being able to choose food from among a lot of choices. Offer a variety of healthy choices and allow the toddler to select what to eat.

**P** (Playing) – The key point for this stage is that it is necessary for toddlers to play with food in order for them to learn about food and practice eating skills.

- Even though this can be messy at mealtimes it is an important way for toddlers to learn about food.
- A good rule for toddler’s play during mealtime is to tell the toddler that she may touch the food as long as it stays on the plate or goes into her mouth.

**S** (Short attention span) – The key point for this stage is that it is important for parents to set up an environment that encourages healthy eating.

- A toddler’s attention span is short. She could be easily distracted or want to leave the meal early.
- Be sure to have toddlers sit down during meals and snacks.
- Be sure to turn off the TV during meals and snacks.
### T.I.P.S. on Toddler Development Activity

For each of the following, name the developmental stage that corresponds to the letter. Then write one thing about the behavior of your toddler that relates to the stage.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Example</th>
<th>Developmental Stage</th>
<th>What does your toddler do?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>T</td>
<td>Talking</td>
<td>My toddler says &quot;no&quot; when she is unhappy.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>S</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
“My NEAT Plan for Mealtime” Refrigerator Card

My NEAT Mealtime Plan for the week of ______

_____________________________________________________________________________
_____________________________________________________________________________
_____________________________________________________________________________

☐ Sunday  ☐ Monday  ☐ Tuesday  ☐ Wednesday  ☐ Thursday  ☐ Friday  ☐ Saturday

Put a check in the box for days that you did it.

Situations to discuss with my home visitor:
_____________________________________________________________________________
_____________________________________________________________________________
_____________________________________________________________________________

My NEAT Mealtime Plan for the week of ______

_____________________________________________________________________________
_____________________________________________________________________________
_____________________________________________________________________________

☐ Sunday  ☐ Monday  ☐ Tuesday  ☐ Wednesday  ☐ Thursday  ☐ Friday  ☐ Saturday

Put a check in the box for days that you did it.

Situations to discuss with my home visitor:
_____________________________________________________________________________
_____________________________________________________________________________
Reinforcing Activity

Parents Provide, Children Decide
Parents Provide, Children Decide

Objectives:
The parent/caregiver will be able to:
• Identify household measurements that are appropriate for toddlers.
• Identify the parents’ and toddler’s roles in the feeding/eating relationship.
• Describe why toddlers should drink no more than four to six ounces of juice each day.

Review of parent’s goal (if the parent used the “My NEAT Plan for Mealtime” since the last activity):

Ask the parent, “How did you do with (insert the goal that the parent had on the “My NEAT Plan for Mealtime?”) (LISTEN and OBSERVE)

• Validate and reinforce the parent’s response. (VALIDATE) Compliment the parent on what she has accomplished. Then briefly discuss any challenges or questions the parent might have about the goal or previous activity.

Introducing this activity

Ask the parent: “How does the amount an adult eats compare to the amount a toddler eats?” Remind parents that a toddler serving is smaller than an adult serving.

Explain to the parent that this week you brought a game about amounts to serve toddler to play with her. The object of the game is to turn over a food card and then try to turn over a household measurement serving card that best fits the suggested amount of food to serve.

After playing the first part of the game, ask the parent two questions:
• “What should a parent do if she gives her child a small amount of food and the toddler tastes it but doesn’t eat all of it?”
• “Why isn’t it a good idea for children to drink a lot of fruit juice each day?”

Validate and reinforce the parent’s responses. (VALIDATE)

• Next, do the “bonus” portion of the game. Ask the parent to separate cards that have something that is the responsibility of the parent and cards that have something that is the responsibility of the child. The correct responses are listed at the end of this activity. Compliment the parent on correct answers and discuss any tasks that might be misplaced.

Activity closing
• Ask the parent if she has any questions.
• Assist her with any questions or concerns she might have.
• Compliment the parent for working with her toddler on this important topic.

**Goal setting (EMPOWERING)**

Ask the parent if there is something related to eating that she would like to work on with her child this week. If yes, then complete “My NEAT Plan for Mealtime” refrigerator card with the parent and put it on the refrigerator with a magnet or tape.

**Materials Needed**

- Matching Game cards — Copy so the food cards are labeled “food” on the reverse side, and serving cards are labeled “toddler-size amount” on the reverse side. Cut out cards.
- Instructor Copies for card game
- My NEAT Plan for Mealtime refrigerator card
- Magnet or tape

**Supplemental Materials Available**

- Bright Ideas for Sharing Food Tasks Handout
- Parents and Toddlers — Sharing Food Tasks Activity
For the Instructor: Key Points About Suggested Amounts to Serve 2-Year-Olds

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Food</th>
<th>Amount</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>100% fruit juice</td>
<td>½ cup</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Milk</td>
<td>½ cup</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cooked vegetable</td>
<td>¼ cup</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Applesauce</td>
<td>¼ cup</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Macaroni</td>
<td>¼ cup</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ground meat</td>
<td>1 ounce</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Role of parent**
- Provides nutritious foods
- Offers variety of healthy food choices
- Serves routine meals and snacks
- Establishes where meals/snacks are served

**Role of child**
- Decides to eat or not eat
- Picks foods to eat from choices offered
- Decides how much to eat
### Suggested Amounts to Serve Toddlers Matching Game

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>100% fruit juice</th>
<th>Applesauce</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Cooked vegetable</td>
<td>Ground meat</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Macaroni</td>
<td>Milk</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Front of cards</th>
<th>Amounts to Serve</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1/2 cup</td>
<td>1/4 cup</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1/4 cup</td>
<td>1 ounce</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1/4 cup</td>
<td>1/2 cup</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 cup</td>
<td>3 ounces</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
# Suggested Amounts to Serve Toddlers Matching Game

This activity includes cards for toddlers to match the correct amount of food with the toddler-sized amounts. The backs of the cards are shown below with the toddler-sized amounts highlighted.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Food Card</th>
<th>Food Card</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Nutrition Education Aimed at Toddlers</td>
<td>Nutrition Education Aimed at Toddlers</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Food Card</th>
<th>Food Card</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Nutrition Education Aimed at Toddlers</td>
<td>Nutrition Education Aimed at Toddlers</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Toddler-Size Amount</th>
<th>Toddler-Size Amount</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Nutrition Education Aimed at Toddlers</td>
<td>Nutrition Education Aimed at Toddlers</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Toddler-Size Amount</th>
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<tr>
<th>Toddler-Size Amount</th>
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<tr>
<th>Toddler-Size Amount</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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## Bonus Game

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Provides food</th>
<th>Decides to eat or not eat</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><img src="image1.png" alt="Image" /></td>
<td><img src="image2.png" alt="Image" /></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Offers variety of food choices</th>
<th>Picks foods to eat from choices offered</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><img src="image3.png" alt="Image" /></td>
<td><img src="image4.png" alt="Image" /></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Serves routine meals and snacks</th>
<th>Decides how much to eat</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><img src="image5.png" alt="Image" /></td>
<td><img src="image6.png" alt="Image" /></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Establishes where meals/snacks are served</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><img src="image7.png" alt="Image" /></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Reinforcing Activity
Mealtime Routines — Planned Times for Meals & Snacks
Mealtime Routines — Planned Times for Meals and Snacks

Objectives:
The parent/caregiver will be able to:

- Identify why it is important for parents/caregivers to provide routine meals and snacks for toddlers.
- Describe/develop a written plan for meals and snacks for her toddler.

Review of parent’s goal (if the parent used the “My NEAT Plan for Mealtime” since the last activity):

Ask the parent, “How did you do with (insert the goal that the parent had on the “My NEAT Plan for Mealtime?”) (LISTEN and OBSERVE)

- Validate and reinforce the parents response. (VALIDATE) Compliment the parent on what she has accomplished. Then briefly discuss any challenges or questions the parent might have about the goal or previous activity.

Introducing this activity

Remind the parent that the parent is responsible for serving meals and snacks at planned/routine times. Explain that today’s activity involves planning healthy meals and snacks for toddlers.

Reinforcing Activity

Ask the parent why it is important for toddlers to eat planned/routine meals and snacks. Listen to the parent and validate her response. If you would like to provide additional information, you could add information from the key messages at the end of this activity. For example, if the parent states that children get hungry if they don’t eat every few hours, then you might say, “Yes, young children have small stomachs so they need to eat every few hours. It also is easier to choose the right amount of food to serve for their level of hunger when they get meals and snacks at set times.”

Ask the parent to describe the typical routine for meals and snacks for her toddler and write it on the “Meals and Snacks Plan” worksheet. If the parent does not have a typical routine, encourage her to think about a typical day with her toddler. Use questions on the planning handout to help the parent develop a mealtime plan. Leave the completed worksheet with the parent to remind her of the plan.
**Activity closing**

- Ask the parent if she has any questions.
- Assist her with any questions or concerns she might have.
- Compliment the parent for working with her toddler on this important topic.

**Goal setting (EMPOWERING)**

Ask the parent if there is something related to eating that she would like to work on with her toddler this week. If yes, then complete “My NEAT Plan for Mealtime” refrigerator card with the parent and put it on the refrigerator with a magnet or tape.

**Materials needed**

- “Meal and Snack Plan” worksheet
- My NEAT Plan for Mealtime refrigerator card
- Magnet or tape

**Supplemental Materials Available**

- Plan Ahead for Healthy Choices Handout

**For the Instructor: Key Points**

- It is easier for children to self-regulate what they eat if parents offer healthy food choices on a regular basis.
- Having either a meal or snack every couple of hours helps a toddler meet her need for energy and nutrients.
- Planned meals and snacks help parents avoid a toddler being too hungry because there has been too much time between a meal and snack, which might make the toddler cranky, or not hungry because there has not been enough time between a meal and a snack.
Meals and Snacks Plan Worksheet

Example:

Time ______________ Meal or Snack ___________________________________

Time ______________ Meal or Snack ___________________________________

Time ______________ Meal or Snack ___________________________________

Time ______________ Meal or Snack ___________________________________

Time ______________ Meal or Snack ___________________________________

Time ______________ Meal or Snack ___________________________________

Questions to consider when planning

When does your toddler usually wake up in the morning?

When does your toddler usually go to sleep at night?

When does your toddler usually take a nap?

When do you usually have meals with your toddler and/or family?
Introducing New Foods

Objectives:
The parent/caregiver will be able to:
- Identify two ways to introduce new foods.
- Identify two or more strategies to help her toddler eat vegetables.

Review of parent’s goal (if the parent used the “My NEAT Plan for Mealtime” since the last activity):

Ask the parent, “How did you do with (insert the goal that the parent had on the “My NEAT Plan for Mealtime?”) (LISTEN and OBSERVE)

- Validate and reinforce the parent’s response. (VALIDATE) Compliment the parent on what she has accomplished. Then briefly discuss any challenges or questions the parent might have about the goal or previous activity.

Introducing this activity

Remind the parent that the parent is responsible for providing routine meals and snacks. Explain that you understand that sometimes it can be challenging to introduce new foods, and that many parents tell you that their toddlers are “picky eaters” especially with vegetables.

Reinforcing Activity

Ask the parent what she does to encourage her toddler to try new foods and what she remembers about the parent’s role in feeding her toddler. Listen to the parent and validate her response. Then share the mealtime scenario described at the end of this activity with the parent. If the parent would like to read the scenario with you, give her a copy.

After reading the scenario, ask the parent:

“What do you think the parent did right in the scenario?”

- Sat down and ate with toddler at meals
- Offered nutritious foods
- Encouraged toddler to eat or taste new food
- Did not get upset when the toddler didn’t swallow or eat her broccoli
- Set the expectation that she might like the food when she tries it again
“Is there anything else that the parent could try to encourage her toddler to eat broccoli?”

- Have the toddler watch the parent prepare the broccoli; serve very small portions — we can’t tell from the story
- Be sure to offer broccoli again within 2 weeks

**Activity closing**

- Ask the parent if she has any questions.
- Assist her with any questions or concerns she might have.
- Compliment the parent for working with her child on this important topic.

**Goal setting (EMPOWERING)**

Ask the parent if there is something related to eating that she would like to work on with his child this week. If yes, then complete “My NEAT Plan for Mealtime” refrigerator card with the parent and put it on the refrigerator with a magnet or tape.

**Materials needed**

- Mealtime Scenario – Instructor Copy
- My NEAT Plan for Mealtime refrigerator card
- Magnet or tape

**Supplemental Materials Available**

- Mealtime Scenario – Parent Copy
- Tips to Help Your Toddler Eat Vegetables Handout
- Tips to Help Your Toddler Eat New Foods Handout
- Healthy Attitudes Handouts
- There’s a Picky Eater at Home Handout
Scenario

Imagine that a parent and a toddler are sitting at the kitchen table, and eating dinner and talking. The parent served her toddler spaghetti, canned peaches, and milk, plus cooked broccoli, a food she has never tried before. The toddler eats most of the spaghetti and peaches, and drinks her milk but doesn’t even taste her broccoli. The parent eats her broccoli and encourages her toddler to taste her broccoli. Her toddler takes a small bite, but spits it out on the plate. The parent says, “Good job! You tasted a new food. Maybe next time when you try it you will like it.”

For the Instructor: Key Points

- Tasting new foods is a way that toddlers explore the world. They might want to try new food and also may be afraid.
- Offering new foods many times (10-20) can be necessary to develop a taste preference.
- Taste preferences change and expand as we get older and mature.
- It’s important for parents to model tasting of new foods.
- It is necessary that toddlers eat many types of foods to get the vitamins and other nutrients they need to stay healthy.
- It is normal for toddlers to refuse to eat a food.
- Respect food preferences. Toddlers, like anyone, have food likes and dislikes.
Mealtime Scenario

Instructor Copy

Suppose a parent and her toddler are eating dinner and talking at the kitchen table. The parent has made spaghetti, canned peaches, cooked broccoli and milk. The toddler loves spaghetti and eats it and the peaches. The parent eats broccoli, smiles and encourages her toddler to eat broccoli. The toddler timidly takes a small bite, but spits it out on the plate. The parent smiles and says, “Good job! You tasted a new food. Maybe next time when you are bigger and try it you will like it.”

What do you think was done right in the scenario?

• Sat down and ate with toddler at meals
• Offered nutritious foods
• Encouraged toddler to eat or taste new food
• Did not get upset when toddler didn’t swallow or eat her broccoli
• Set the expectation that she might like the food when she tries it again

Is there anything that could have been done differently to encourage the toddler to eat broccoli?

• Have the toddler watch the parent prepare the broccoli
• Serve very small portions — we can’t tell from the story
• Be sure to offer broccoli within two weeks

What are some things to try to encourage a toddler to eat?

• Offer a variety of foods for my toddler to pick from
• Set an example by trying all of the foods on the table
Reinforcing Activity

Eat Together, Eat Better!
Eat Together, Eat Better!

Objectives:
The parent/caregiver will be able to:
• Identify things that can make family mealtimes pleasant for a toddler.
• State three things she does or plans to do to make mealtimes with her toddler a good experience.

Review of parent’s goal: (if the parent used the “My NEAT Plan for Mealtime” since the last activity):

Ask the parent, “How did you do with (insert the goal that the parent had on the “My NEAT Plan for Mealtime”)? (LISTEN and OBSERVE)

• Validate and reinforce the parent’s response. (VALIDATE) Compliment the parent on what she has accomplished. Then briefly discuss any challenges or questions the parent might have about the goal or previous activity.

Introducing this activity
Remind the parent that talking is a stage of development for children. Ask the parent what she thinks her toddler’s talking has to do with today’s activity, which is eating together at mealtimes. Listen and validate her answer. Explain that toddlers are more likely to stay seated and interested in meals when parents talk and listen to them.

Reinforcing activity
Share the “Making Mealtimes Pleasant” worksheet with the parent. Work with her to circle the number for the things that make a mealtimes pleasant and cross off the things that could make mealtimes unpleasant. Encourage the parent to identify 3 things she does or plans to do to make a mealtimes a good experience.

For the Instructor: Key Points
• Toddlers are less likely to misbehave or act out in attention-seeking ways during meals when parents talk and listen to them.
• Toddlers are more likely to stay seated and interested in the meal when parents sit, talk and listen to them.
• Showing enthusiasm for a variety of foods makes mealtimes more pleasant and helps toddlers learn about new foods.
• Turn off the TV during meals and snacks. The TV can distract family members from talking together.
• Eating together provides family members a chance to talk and reconnect.
• Eating together as a family helps children have a sense of security and belonging and creates warm, happy memories for your child.
Activity closing

• Ask the parent if she has any questions.
• Assist her with any questions or concerns she might have.
• Compliment the parent for working with her toddler on this important topic.

Goal setting (EMPOWERING)

Ask the parent if there is something related to eating that she would like to work on with her toddler this week. If yes, then complete “My NEAT Plan for Mealtime” refrigerator card with the parent and put it on the refrigerator with a magnet or tape.

Materials needed

- “Making Mealtimes Pleasant” Handout
- My NEAT Plan for Mealtime refrigerator card
- Magnet or tape

Supplemental Materials Available

- Pathways to Good Communication with your Toddler during Meal-times Handout
- Pathways to Good Communication with your Toddler during Meal-times Guidelines
- My Family Mealtimes Handout
- My Family Mealtimes – Instructor Copy
Making Mealtimes Pleasant

**Directions:** Circle the number for the things that make a mealtine pleasant. Mark a X on the number for the things that could make mealtimes unpleasant.

1. Make mealtimes a family activity. Everyone can be involved in creating the meal, including the children.

2. Find age-appropriate ways to let the children help with the meal, such as putting forks on the table.

3. Keep the TV on during mealtimes.

4. Let children decide where they want to eat. It’s OK for children to take food from the kitchen and eat while walking around the house.

5. Have regular snack and mealtimes throughout the day. Having mealtimes at the same time each day helps stop fights about going to the table.

6. Keep the conversation pleasant at mealtimes.

7. Talk should be light, happy, upbeat. Set the tone for your children. If you talk about happy things, then the rest of the family will be more likely to do the same.

8. Don’t let children talk during the meal. Children can listen to adults but should focus on eating, not talking.

9. Be creative! If you can’t eat a meal together, try a snack or Saturday breakfast.
Making Mealtimes Pleasant

Instructor Copy

Directions: Circle the number for the things that make a mealtime pleasant. Mark a X on the number for the things that could make mealtimes unpleasant.

1. Make mealtimes a family activity. Everyone can be involved in creating the meal, including the children.

2. Find age-appropriate ways to let the children help with the meal, such as putting forks on the table.

X Keep the TV on during mealtimes.

X Let children decide where they want to eat. It’s OK for children to take food from the kitchen and eat while walking around the house.

5. Have regular snack and mealtimes throughout the day. Having mealtimes at the same time each day helps stop fights about going to the table.

6. Keep the conversation pleasant at mealtimes.

7. Talk should be light, happy, upbeat. Set the tone for your children. If you talk about happy things, then the rest of the family will be more likely to do the same.

X Don’t let children talk during the meal. Children can listen to adults but should focus on eating, not talking.

9. Be creative! If you can’t eat a meal together, try a snack or Saturday breakfast.
Reinforcing Activity

Helping Toddlers Behave
Helping Toddlers Behave

Objective:
The parent/caregiver will be able to identify at least two things that help toddlers behave in a scenario.

Review of parent’s goal (if the parent used the “My NEAT Plan for Mealtime” since the last activity):

Ask the parent, “How did you do with (insert the goal that the parent had on the “My NEAT Plan for Mealtime?”) (LISTEN and OBSERVE)

• Validate and reinforce the parent’s response. (VALIDATE) Compliment the parent on what she has accomplished. Then briefly discuss any challenges or questions the parent might have about the goal or previous activity.

Introducing this activity

Explain that today’s activity focuses on helping toddlers behave. Tell the parent that you will read a sample situation and then ask her what she thinks the mother did right, and what she could have done differently to help her children behave.

Reinforcing Activity

Read the scenario described at the end of this activity to the parent. If she would like to follow along, give her a copy of the scenario. Then, ask the parent, “What did the mother do to help her children behave?” The positive things she did were:

• Sitting down and eating with children.
• Modeling eating the peas.
• Encouraging the toddler to try the peas.
• Not fixing other foods.

Then ask, “What are things she should not have done?”

• Do not bribe the toddler to eat using a cookie as a reward.
• Do not allow the toddler to leave the table (unless it is clear the toddler is not hungry.)
• Do not have the TV on.
Listen to the parent and validate her responses. If she does not identify the positive and negative aspects, ask whether specific things were good. For example, if she doesn’t mention that the parent didn’t offer to prepare other foods, ask, “What do you think about the fact that the parent wouldn’t give her toddler cereal when she didn’t want to eat her sandwich?”

**Materials needed**
- Mealtime scenario
- My NEAT Plan for Mealtime refrigerator card
- Magnet or tape

**Activity closing**
- Ask the parent if she has any questions.
- Assist her with any questions or concerns she might have.
- Compliment the parent for working with her toddler on this important topic.

**Goal setting (EMPOWERING)**
Ask the parent if there is something related to eating that she would like to work on with her toddler this week. If yes, then complete “My NEAT Plan for Mealtime” refrigerator card with the parent and put it on the refrigerator with a magnet or tape.

**Supplemental Materials Available**
- P.L.A.N. Handout
- Helping Toddlers Behave Handout
- Helping Toddlers Behave Answer Key
- Behavior Strategies Chart
- Behavior Strategies – Instructor Copy
- Key Points for Setting Effective Rules Handout
For the Instructor: Key Points

Key Points: Positive Behavior

- Parent sits down and eats with children.
- Parent models eating the peas.
- Encourages the toddler to try the peas.
- Does not fix other food.

Key Points: Negative Behavior

- Do not give the toddler a cookie within 1-2 hours of mealtime.
- Do not bribe the toddler to eat using a cookie as a reward.
- Only allow the toddler to leave the table if it is clear the toddler is not hungry and an attempt has been made to engage the toddler in eating or talking.
- The TV is on.
Mealtime Scenario

Read Along!

The television is playing loudly. Two-year old Annie walks into the kitchen where her mother is making lunch.

Annie says to her mother, “I’m hungry.”

Mother: “Lunch will be ready soon. Here nibble on this for now.” (She hands Annie a cookie.)

(Mother puts food on plates, carries them to the table, and sits down with her two children.)

Annie: (Carries her cookie to the table and sits down) “I don’t like these.” (Points to some peas on her plate.)

Mother: “Try them. You will like them. You ate them last night in your soup. Look, I like them.” (Parent takes a bite.)

Bobby (3 years old): “Why does she get a cookie? I don’t want this sandwich. I want a cookie!”

Mother: “Be quiet Bobby and eat what is on your plate! Annie, give me the cookie. If you don’t eat all the food on your plate, you can’t have the cookie back.”

Annie starts crying.

Mother: “Annie—you had better eat your food or you won’t get to finish your cookie!”

Bobby: “I don’t want this sandwich. I want cereal.”

Mother: This is the food we are having for lunch. I am not fixing anything else. If you want to eat, you must stay at the table. You may leave the table, but the food can’t go with you.

Bobby: “Hooray, my favorite TV show is on. I am leaving.”

Annie: “YAH! I am going to watch TV too! (She runs off with her sandwich.)

Mother (yelling after them): “There is no more food until snack time!”
Reinforcing Activity

Healthy Snacks
Healthy Snacks

**Objectives:**
The parent/caregiver will be able to:
- State why healthy snacks are important for toddlers.
- Identify foods in the major food groups that would make healthy snacks.

**Review of parent’s goal** (if the parent used the “My NEAT Plan for Mealtime” since the last activity):

**Ask the parent, “How did you do with (insert the goal that the parent had on the ‘My NEAT Plan for Mealtime’)?”** (LISTEN and OBSERVE)

- Validate and reinforce the parent’s response. (VALIDATE) Compliment the parent on what she has accomplished. Then briefly discuss any challenges or questions the parent might have about the goal or previous activity.

**Introducing this activity**

Remind the parent that it is the parent’s responsibility to provide healthy meals and snacks. Ask the parent why healthy snacks are important for toddlers. Listen and validate her response. Expand on her response if you think key points are missing. For example, if she says “Children get hungry in between meals”, then you could say, “Yes, young children have small stomachs and they need to eat every few hours when they are awake to get the energy and nutrients they need to be healthy.”

**Reinforcing Activity**

Show the parent the five food groups. Work with the parent to list two foods from each food group that might be served as part of a healthy snack. Then identify three snack pairs — that is foods from two food groups — that make a healthy snack that her child might enjoy. Write these pairs on the Snack Pairs worksheet that is provided. Food group and snack pair possibilities are listed in the Key Points section of this activity.

**Activity closing**

- Ask the parent if she has any questions.
- Assist her with any questions or concerns she might have.
- Compliment the parent for working with her toddler on this important topic.
For the Instructor: Key Points

• Snacks contribute to toddlers’ energy and nutrient needs.

• The time between meals is often four hours or more. Toddlers’ small stomachs cannot hold much food and they get hungry after only a few hours.

• Healthy snack choices include foods from the five major food groups. Encourage parents to serve food from at least two food groups (especially from groups that children do not get enough of such as vegetables and fruits).

• Choose snacks that are appropriate for the toddler’s stage of development. For example, avoid foods that are a high choking risk. Toddlers often like finger foods.

• Limit the total amount of fruit juice that toddlers drink to no more than ½ cup (4 ounces)* a day. If your toddler drinks a lot of fruit juice, she will not be hungry for other foods her body needs from all the food groups. Too much juice also can cause diarrhea and cavities. You might serve this juice in a cup with one snack or at a meal. Give your toddler water in between meals to quench her thirst.

*Please note: Limit the total amount of fruit juice to ¼ cup (2 ounces) a day for 1-2 year olds (American Academy of Pediatrics, 2002).

Sample foods

Bread group: bread, crackers, graham crackers, cereal, tortilla

Vegetable group: soft vegetables, such as canned green bean pieces or broccoli, that have been steamed to soften, piece of tomato

Fruit group: small pieces of fresh or canned fruit, 100% fruit juice

Milk group: milk, cheese, yogurt, pudding

Meat group: peanut butter, hard-cooked egg pieces, bean dip

Sample snack pairs

• Graham cracker and milk
• Yogurt with crushed fruit
• Tortilla pieces topped with bean dip
• Cheese and crackers
Supplemental Materials Available

- What Choices Would You Offer to Your Toddler Handout & Answer Key

Goal setting (EMPOWERING)

Ask the parent if there is something related to eating that she would like to work on with her toddler this week. If yes, then complete “My NEAT Plan for Mealtime” refrigerator card with the caregiver and put it on the refrigerator with a magnet or tape.

Materials needed

- Snack Pairs Worksheet
- My NEAT Plan for Mealtime refrigerator card
- Magnet or tape
Snack Pairs Worksheet

For each snack, list two foods that you would serve your toddler. Choose foods from two different food groups for each snack. Circle the food groups in the snack.

Snack pair  
Vanilla yogurt  
Diced peaches  
Grains  
Vegetables  
Milk  
Meat  
Fruit

Snack pair  
__________  
__________  
Grains  
Vegetables  
Milk  
Meat  
Fruit

Snack pair  
__________  
__________  
Grains  
Vegetables  
Milk  
Meat  
Fruit

Snack pair  
__________  
__________  
Grains  
Vegetables  
Milk  
Meat  
Fruit
Food Safety

**Objective:**
The parent/caregiver will be able to:
Demonstrate effective hand washing and identify foods that are safe for their toddler to eat.

**Review of parent’s goal** (if the parent used the “My NEAT Plan for Mealtime” since the last activity):

Ask the parent, “How did you do with (insert the goal that the parent had on the “My NEAT Plan for Mealtime”)? (LISTEN and OBSERVE)

• Validate and reinforce the parent’s response. (VALIDATE) Compliment the parent on what she has accomplished. Then briefly discuss any challenges or questions the parent might have about the goal or previous activity.

**Introducing this activity**

Today we are going to talk about food safety, including washing hands and reducing the risk of choking for toddlers. Knowing ways to reduce the risk of choking will decrease your worry about what your child eats. Clean hands will help keep your family healthy.

**Reinforcing activity**

There are two parts to this activity:

1. Hand washing
   a. Have the parent demonstrate to the toddler how to wash hands.
   b. Have toddler wash hands with the help of the parent.
   c. Have the toddler outline their hands or have the parent do it on the form provided, “Handwashing,” Handout.
   d. Have the parent post the Handwashing Handout on the refrigerator or in the bathroom as a reminder to wash hands.

2. Choking
   a. Show the parent the Food Pictures Handout.
   b. Have the parent pick out the foods that are less of a choking risk for the toddler to eat and the foods that are a greater choking risk for the toddler to eat.
Supplemental Materials Available

- Keeping Young Children from Choking Handout
- Keeping Young Children from Choking Worksheet & Answer Key

For the Instructor: Key Points

- A good way to make sure they are washing hands long enough is to sing the Alphabet song while washing — 20 seconds is longer than you think!

- Any food can cause choking, but nuts, popcorn, raw carrots, jelly beans, hard candy, and large pieces of food are especially dangerous.

- One of the most important things the adult can do to prevent choking is make sure the toddler eats meals and snacks only when sitting down and that the adult remain with the toddler during meal and snack times.
### Food Pictures Handout

*Instructions: Cross out foods that may cause toddlers to choke.*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Popcorn</th>
<th>Cherries</th>
<th>Hot Dog (whole)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><img src="image1" alt="Popcorn" /></td>
<td><img src="image2" alt="Cherries" /></td>
<td><img src="image3" alt="Hot Dog" /></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hard Candy</td>
<td>Cheese</td>
<td>Bread</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td><img src="image5" alt="Cheese" /></td>
<td><img src="image6" alt="Bread" /></td>
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<td>Nuts</td>
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<td><img src="image9" alt="Apple" /></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tomato (slice)</td>
<td>Sucker</td>
<td>Eggs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td><img src="image11" alt="Sucker" /></td>
<td><img src="image12" alt="Eggs" /></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Orange (slice)</td>
<td>Whole Grapes</td>
<td>Strawberries</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><img src="image13" alt="Orange" /></td>
<td><img src="image14" alt="Whole Grapes" /></td>
<td><img src="image15" alt="Strawberries" /></td>
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</table>
# Food Pictures Handout

Instructions: Cross out foods that may cause toddlers to choke.

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Handwashing

1. Wet hands.
2. Soap.
3. Lather for 20 seconds. (About as long as it takes to sing the Happy Birthday or the Alphabet song twice.)
4. Rinse.
5. Air dry hands or use paper towels.
6. Turn taps off with paper towel if available.

Always Wash Your Hands:

• Before and after touching food.
• After using the washroom.
• After sneezing, coughing or blowing your nose.
• After touching pets or handling garbage.
• After outdoor activities.

Handwashing is one of the “most important means of preventing the spread of infection,” according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) and Dr. Beth Alexander, University Physician, Michigan State University.