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Thank you to Colorado State University Extension of Denver County for the support for the Spanish translation of Family Matters.

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Meal Time Dilemma

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Like learning good manners, learning healthy eating habits is a life skill that can help your child live a healthy, satisfying life. There are some effective strategies to help your child develop good food habits.

Be a good role model. Your child does watch what you eat. Remember, it is not just what you say, but what you do. Children want to grow up doing what their Mom or Dad does. As a parent if you try new foods, chances are your child will try them to. Offer new foods up to 10 or 11 times. Be a good example.

Parents should provide a selection of healthy foods. Children have high nutrient needs. Serve meals and snacks that focus on food that are good sources of nourishment. Moderate the use of sugar and foods high in sugar. Be aware of high fat and high sodium foods.

Regular meals and snacks give children the energy they need to keep them going during the day. It is the parents' responsibility to set times for meals and snacks. Because of small stomachs, young children can not hold enough food to keep them going from one meal to the next. Young children benefit from structure and predictability. Structure allows the child to know when he will be able to eat next.

Make eating times pleasant. Keep the children company at the table. Eating together helps children learn that eating can and should be a pleasurable and enjoyable experience. Be patient at the dinner table creating a positive atmosphere instead of a tone of frustration.

Give your child enough time at the table. Young children do not have the muscle development or skills to eat as fast as adults. They still need time to practice with eating utensils. When they are hungry, young children will revert back to eating with their hands. Give children time to finish eating, but never force them to eat or finish every thing on their plates.

A young child wants to be successful at the table. Parents can offer small portion sizes and encourage children to ask for second helpings, if desired. Think about offering approximately 1 tablespoon of each type of food for every year of the child's age.

Lastly, reward your child with attention and kind words. Console with hugs and talking to them gently. Show love by having FUN together instead of offering food for a treat. Offering food to feel better teaches children to relieve negative feelings by eating. This can lead to overeating later on. Your desire as a parent is to have your child well nourished.

Tips for Food Shopping

- Make a menu for the week.
- Prepare your list according to your menu.
- Check your cupboards to see what you have on hand.
- Shop in the morning or late evening when the store is not crowded.
- Shop by yourself if possible.
- Eat before shopping; shopping when you are hungry may lead to impulse buying.

Strategies at the Store

Brand Name vs. Generic

Ever wonder what the difference is between the “name” brand and the generic brand of a food? Usually, dollars and cents!

Companies spend a lot of money on advertising to get you to buy their brand — but they aren’t spending their money, they are spending your money.

The store brand or generic brand almost always costs less, and usually tastes the same. In fact, they often use the very same ingredients.

Try doing a “blind” taste-test with your kids: buy a generic and a name-brand box of the same cereal; pour two bowls, and don’t tell them which one is generic — see if they can guess the difference!



Resource: Oregon State University Extension, Nutrition Education

Quick and Simple Make at Home

Twisty Minestrone Soup

Makes 16 - ¾ cup portions sizes

Ingredients:

2 cups	Kidney beans, cooked
6 cups	Boiling water
1/3 lb.	Ground beef (optional)
½ cup	Onion, chopped
1 tsp	Salt (optional)
1 (28 oz) can	Crushed tomatoes (or fresh)
1 (10 oz.) pkg	Mixed vegetables, frozen (or 2 cups fresh)
1 tsp	Oregano leaves
¼ tsp	Garlic powder
¼ tsp	Pepper
2	Bay leaves
½ cup	Pasta twists (or any pasta), uncooked

Directions:

1. Cook beef and onion in a pan until beef is browned. Drain grease and add kidney beans.
2. Add tomatoes and remaining ingredients, except pasta, to beef and bean mixture.
3. Return to boil. Reduce heat and simmer for 20 minutes.
4. Add pasta and continue cooking until pasta is tender, about 10 minutes. Stir several times to prevent sticking.
5. Remove bay leaves.

Reference: CSU Extension, Easy Meals on a Budget. (July 2002).

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