

## Teacher Guide: Feeding Young Children (Ages 2 - 5 years of age)

**Session title:** *Serving love to your children.*  
*Serve love when feeding your children.*  
*You can serve love when feeding your children.*

**Key Message:** There are many ways parents and caregivers can have positive influences on children's lives. Everyday childrearing practices, like feeding children healthful foods, has a big impact on children's health and happiness. Share with participants: ***"You may be faced with challenges everyday that make parenting difficult but there are simple things can you do to raise a happy and healthy child."***

Sample **ANCHOR** question for participants:

- ***"As a parent it can be difficult planning meals for your family. Think back to your childhood. How did your mom, dad or grandparents influence your eating habits as a child?"*** Let participants share their childhood experiences with others in small or large groups. Here are some examples of things parents have said to influence the way their child eats. Share these with participants who are having a hard time coming up with examples of their own:  
***"If you do not eat your spinach you will not grow up to be big and strong."***  
***"Clean your plate. There are starving children around the world."***
- ***"It may be frustrating for you to cook meals when one or more of your children are picky eaters. What have you found useful in meal planning or preparing foods to encourage your child to try new foods?"***

**Background Information** - Choose the appropriate information below to **ADD** to your lesson.

### **Ten Simple Messages:**

1. Let children decide how much food to eat. Serve small portion sizes and let them ask for more.
2. Praise children often. Focus on what they are doing right.
3. Involve your children in planning meals, grocery shopping, cooking and cleanup.
4. Enjoyable family meals together strengthen family ties.
5. Set a good example. Your children are learning from you when you eat healthful foods and exercise.
6. Young children need only a half cup of juice each day. Serve water and milk.
7. Serve low-fat (fat-free or 1%) to children over two years of age.
8. Offer new foods often. Do not force a child to eat.
9. Offer bite-size foods for small children. Have children sit while eating to prevent choking.
10. It may take offering a new food to your child many times before they become interested in trying it.

**DO NOT force children to eat.** Young children are not always interested in trying new foods. Offer these new foods in small sample sizes. It may take offering new food to the child many times before they become interested in trying it. Do not reward children for their eating habits and do not use food as a reward.

**Plan meals for the week.** Encourage your children to help plan meals. It is important to offer children a variety of foods at meals and one of those foods should be a food they like to eat.

- At breakfast and lunch Offer foods from 3 or more of the five food groups. Example – Breakfast; milk, cereal and juice.
- Main meal Offer foods from 4 or more of the five food groups. Example – milk, rice, broccoli, ham and applesauce.
- Snacks Plan for your child to have one or two snacks each day. Serve snacks a few hours after main meals or 2 hours before the next main meal. Offer foods from 2 or more of the five major food groups. Example – apple juice and graham crackers

### **BE A GOOD ROLE MODEL.**

- Eat with your child.
- Try new foods and new ways of preparing foods. Have your child help with meal preparation.
- Be active. Play with your children.

### **Portion Sizes**

There is no magic formula for knowing how much to feed young children. A child's appetite will change day-by-day depending on the how fast they are growing and how active they are. Start by serving small portions of food and allow the child to ask for more if he/she is still hungry. If your child seems to have plenty of energy, appears healthy, is growing and is eating a variety of foods then their diet is probably providing the nutrients their body needs. Always check with your health care provider if you have concerns about your child's diet.

Handout: *"Enough to Eat, without Overfeeding"*

### **Choking**

Children choking on food can happen very quickly and when least expected. Always stay with children when they are eating and do not let children run around with food in their mouth. Handout: *"Food Choking Dangers"*.

### **Kids Helping in the Kitchen**

Children involved with shopping for food and preparing food are more likely to eat the foods they helped to prepare. Have children do age-appropriate tasks when helping in the kitchen.

Handout: *"Kids in the Kitchen"*.

## Snacking

Snacks are an important part of a child's diet. Young children have small stomachs and need to eat six times a day. Plan to serve your child a snack twice a day. Remember to offer healthful snacks. Include foods from two food groups for each snack such as milk and chunks of banana.

Handout: "Snacks"

## Food Allergies

Food sensitivity (having an unpleasant reaction to something eaten) is much more common than a child or adult having a food allergy. A food allergy is more serious than food sensitivity. Food allergies trigger an immune reaction in the body and can cause death. It is important that parents take their child to a doctor if their child has a bad reaction to a food. The doctor will be able to identify if the child has a true food allergy.

Handout: "Food Allergies"

## Activities (AWAY)

1. Practice meal and snack planning for the week keeping in mind food preferences of young children. Discuss healthful food choices.
2. Prepare some snacks keeping in mind children's portion sizes and food safety/choking dangers for young children.

### Recipes

- Munchin' Maniac Recipes (*\*Note: Choose recipes appropriate for the age group. Some foods pose a choking danger for younger children so do not pick recipes that may contain these foods. These foods are the ones that cause the most choking in children under the age of three or four: nuts, seeds, popcorn, hot dogs, whole grapes, hard candy, raw carrots, cough drops, chips, chewing gum, peanut butter, marshmallows, pretzels, raisins, cherries with pits, chunks of meat and raw celery.*)

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