

Overview

Support Positive Mealtimes



Public Health Dietitians work with Alberta's Early Learning and Child Care (ELCC) sector to promote healthy eating environments, to help raise healthy kids.

Together, we identified positive meal and snack times as a priority. Our ELCC partners shared their challenges and ideas, and provided feedback on these resources. Since ELCC settings vary, these ideas may need to be adapted for your specific setting.

Whether food is provided by your child care or families, all ELCC settings can promote positive eating behaviours in children. Healthy eating is more than the foods you eat – it's also about where, when, why, and how you eat.

Use these resources to promote positive meal and snack times in ELCC settings, and to support families at home. Through this, you can enrich children's social connections, learning, and health.

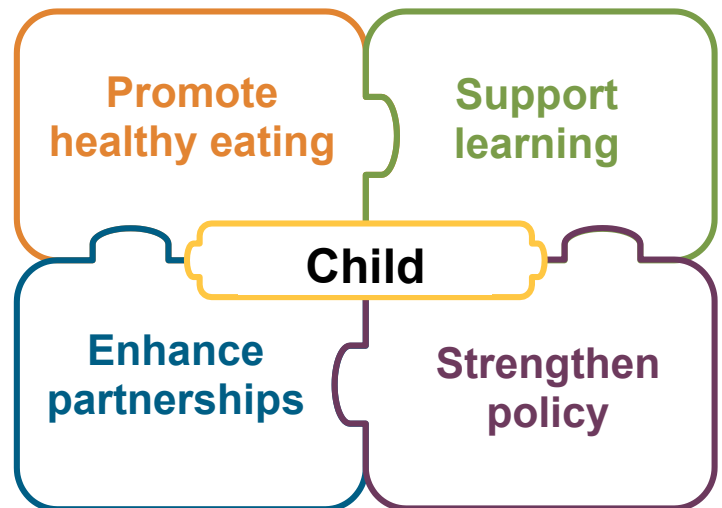
For more information contact PublicHealthNutrition@AHS.ca

Resources

Overview	Use with staff to provide an overview of positive meal and snack times.
Putting These Resources into Practice	Use these ideas to support change in your child care.
Why Support Positive Mealtimes?	Share the benefits of positive meal and snack times with staff and families.
Checklist	Use this to review meal and snack times with staff. Identify what is going well, what could be better, and make a plan to improve.
Share Your Ideas	Gather ideas from staff about what is going well and what could be better.
Tips to Support Positive Mealtimes	Share with staff and post on bulletin board.
Poster Series	Post these in your eating area to promote children's social connections, learning, and health.
Connect with Conversation	Spark friendly table talk with these tips and question cards
More Information for ELCC and Families	Share these resources with staff and families.

Healthy eating is more than the foods you eat

- Consider how your child care promotes healthy eating, supports learning, enhances partnership, and strengthens policy.
- Be intentional about supporting positive meal and snack times to promote children's social connection, learning, and health.



Promote healthy eating

- Make meal and snack times pleasant and relaxed. Sit together, eat together, talk together!
- Create a child friendly setting with routines and transitions, and age-appropriate dishes, utensils, and seating.
- Offer a variety of healthy foods and drinks. Include new foods, and cultural and traditional foods. Ensure water is always available.

Enhance partnerships

- Collaborate with health services and other programs to support consistent healthy eating practices.
- Partner with families to support children.

Support learning

- Offer learning opportunities for staff and families on healthy eating.
- Encourage learning by leading by example, involving children, following the [feeding relationship](#) and offering family-style meal service.
- Help children learn about food outside of meal and snack times, with nutrition activities like stories and crafts.

Strengthen policy

- Include nutrition in your child care policy to promote healthy food and drinks, and positive attitudes about food and eating.
- Ensure staffing, routines and transitions support positive meal and snack times.
- Share your policy with families.