

### EFFECTIVE STRATEGIES TO SUPPORT CHILDREN'S DEVELOPMENT AND LEARNING

- Promote and support breastfeeding for young children.
- Provide education about the benefits of breastfeeding for both mother and infant. Feed iron-fortified formula to infants who are not breastfed.
- When an infant shows early signs of hunger (beginning to stir when sleeping), begin preparing food or milk so it is ready when the child is ready to eat.
- Hold and talk with infants during feeding and allow enough time for them to finish bottles or food.
- Offer types, sizes, and textures of food that each infant or toddler can eat safely and successfully. Work with families, dietitians, and health care professionals to offer breast milk, formula, foods, and other forms of nutrition appropriate for children with special nutritional needs.



- Ask families about any history of food allergies and serve only foods that are safe and meet their health needs.
- Allow children to leave food uneaten. Do not force them to eat more than they want. They may be full.
- Allow enough time for young children to explore foods with their fingers and to eat.
- Develop and provide *routine* and relaxed atmosphere for meals and snacks.
- *Model* appropriate mealtime behaviors. Talk about nutritious foods and how they help the body (“Milk helps make your bones and teeth strong.”).
- Prepare nutritious snacks and meals with children. Expose them to an assortment of foods, including foods from their own *cultures* that show respect for families’ cultural, religious, and other preferences.
- Offer new nutrient-dense foods of varying tastes and textures. Repeated exposure helps to make the food more familiar and reduce rejection. According to research, you may need to offer new foods 8-15 times.
- Communicate which foods are nutritious and which foods are less nutritious.
- Give children opportunities during snacks and meals to practice pouring, using utensils, and serving themselves food.
- Reward children’s efforts and/or behaviors with positive reinforcement, not food. Some options include verbal praise, smiles/excitement, stickers, or child’s favorite activity.
- To ensure children maintain a healthy relationship with food, avoid using it as a reward, bribe or punishment.