

Pointers For Parents

Tips On Turning Preschoolers Into Healthy Eaters For Life

(NAPSA)—Getting children to eat healthy is a challenge most parents face early on; however, with a few simple steps, parents can help their children develop good eating habits that will last a lifetime.

Parents can lead by example and act as healthy role models for their children. Sticking to mealtime and snack routines, and offering children a variety of food choices, will also help children establish healthier eating habits.

“Parents face many feeding obstacles as their children reach 2 years old,” said Judith Levine, R.D., M.S. “A child’s appetite may decrease as growth slows, outside influences from television or other children start to impact a child’s food choices, and some children start to decline foods and beverages they once enjoyed as they start using utensils or switch from bottle to sippy cup.”

Levine adds that there are many resources available to help parents during this important time. She recommends www.mealsmatter.org—a meal-planning Web site developed by registered dietitians at Dairy Council of California—to find tips and tools for getting children to eat healthier.

Here are some tips that will help your preschooler become a better eater:

- Establish regular snack and mealtimes, since routines make children feel secure.

- Offer a variety of healthy foods and let your child choose how much he or she will eat of a particular food. Promote nutrient-rich choices such as low-fat milk and dairy products, whole grains, fruits and vegetables.

- Be a healthy role model for your child. Eat healthy meals your-



With a few simple steps, parents can help their children develop good eating habits that will last a lifetime.

self and try new foods with them.

- Prepare food with your child as often as possible to get them involved in mealtimes.

- Offer children small amounts of new foods. Too much on the plate can overwhelm them.

The Meals Matter Web site also offers many tools for parents to help in the process of getting children to eat healthier, including:

- A developmental chart detailing common eating patterns and nutritional needs at different stages of growth;

- Downloadable tip sheets, offering tools for fostering healthy eating habits; and

- Numerous nutritious, kid-friendly recipes such as a fresh fruit burrito, creamy yogurt vegetable dip and handheld ham and cheese wraps.

For more information, visit www.mealsmatter.org. Along with information on establishing good eating habits for preschoolers, Meals Matter provides busy families with nutrition information, hundreds of recipes and interactive meal-planning tools.