

HEALTHY EATING HABITS AND EXERCISE

You must have thought about what is good food and exercise for your child, and perhaps felt unsure at times. It is a good thing to have a structure to your day that you can keep to and have clear routines; this makes things easier both for you as a parent and for the child. It makes it easier to have a good balance between food, exercise and sleep, which is the foundation for the proper development of the child's health.

As a parent, you are the child's main role model, and the child will mimic your good, and your less good, habits. If you have healthy eating habits and limit the time you spend sitting still, your child will mimic this.

Be sensitive to your child's signals – tiredness, hunger, anger, joy, the need to be close to you – and to the various ways of treating and acknowledging your child. It is easy for us to want to comfort and reward our children with confectionery, drinks and more time in front of the screen. Just remember that this can become a habit faster than you think and lead to behaviour that can have undesired health effects.

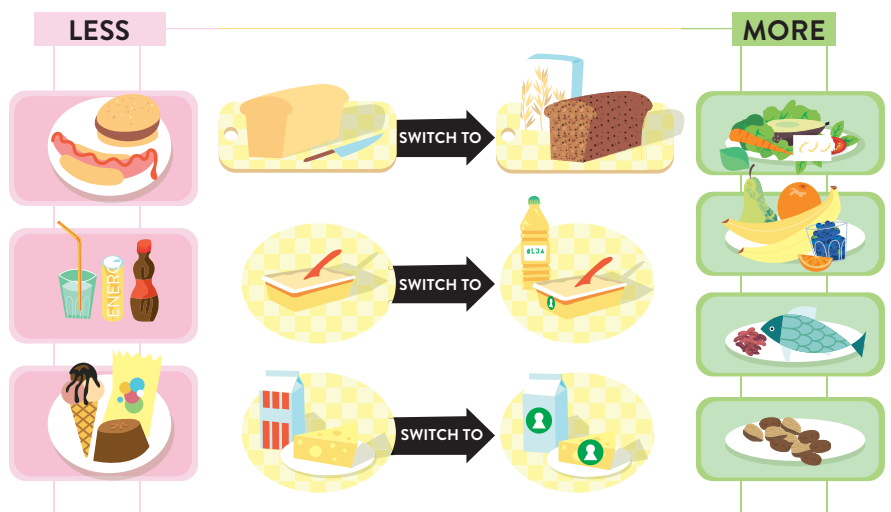
HEALTHY EATING HABITS

TIME FOR FOOD AND EATING TOGETHER

Children and adults need to eat regularly. This means breakfast, lunch, dinner and 2-3 snacks, including at weekends. It makes it easier to eat just the right amount, and gives the teeth a rest between meals.

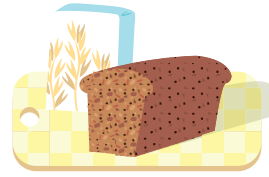
FRUIT, BERRIES AND VEGETABLES

Serve something colourful with each meal. Endless variations are possible. Anything from including vegetables in the cooking to serving sticks of cucumber, carrot, cauliflower, etc. Fruit can either be eaten as it comes or turned into a fruit salad. Remember that many children need a long time to get used to new tastes and consistencies. From the age of four, the recommendation is two pieces of fruit and two portions of vegetables a day. It is better to serve a child pieces or slices of fruit than smoothies or fruit purée. Eating and chewing are good motor exercises for the muscles of the mouth, and valuable for the child's language development.



BREAD, PASTA AND GRAIN

It is good to choose wholegrain bread and pasta products. This need not be bread containing the entire grain. Wholegrain means that all parts of the grain are present – endosperm, germ and bran. The grain may be entire, crushed or ground. Rolled oats are 100% wholegrain.



DRINKS

Water is the best drink when the child is thirsty and as a drink to accompany meals. Milk or oat-based drinks can be used as a drink with meals, and a couple of glasses a day is just right to meet the child's calcium needs. Avoiding sweet drinks such as cordials, fizzy drinks and juice helps keep teeth healthy.

JUST THE RIGHT PORTION SIZE

Plan and serve the food based on the 'plate of food model' – some vegetables, some potato/rice/pasta/bulgur wheat and some fowl/fish/vegetable protein/meat. This will ensure a good composition of various nutrients. The child's hand can help you decide how much is just right.



EXERCISE

Walking, running, jumping, creeping, crawling, climbing, balancing – all forms of exercise and activity are valuable to the child's development, health and well-being. Encourage exercise through play and everyday activities. Limit the time spent sitting and in front of the screen. Remember – as a parent, you are the child's main role model

