Encouraging Healthy Eating: An Environmental Focus

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Pair and share activity

Find partner, introduce self, share one observation of a young child eating
Today’s session

• Defining healthy eating for children, 2 to 4 years old
• Food intake – recommendations vs. reality
• Environmental influences on children’s eating
• Evidence-based strategies to promote healthy eating
• Resources
Eat more:
• Whole fruits and veggies
• Low-fat milk
• Whole grains

Eat fewer:
• Added sugars
• Solid fats
• Refined grain products
The reality for children

• About 70% consume a distinct vegetable at least once a day
• French fries or other fried potatoes are most popular vegetable
• About 85% consume fruit at least once a day when 100% juice is included
• Drops to about 72% when juice is excluded

Source: Feeding Infants and Toddlers Study (FITS), 2008
• Less than 30% drink low-fat milk (1% or skim)
• Almost 50% drink sweetened beverages daily (35% fruit-flavored drinks, 8% sodas, 7% sweetened tea or coffee)

Source: Feeding Infants and Toddlers Study (FITS), 2008
The reality for children (cont.)

• Almost 40% of children consumed whole grain cereal once a day
• Only 9% of children consumed whole grain bread
• About 50% consumed cakes, pies, cookies or pastries daily

Source: Feeding Infants and Toddlers Study (FITS), 2008
What is one thing that surprised you about what young children eat?
Influences on children’s food intake

Adapted from Davison and Birch ecological model of predictors of childhood overweight
Parents and other adult care providers are responsible for:

• What foods are available in their home
• What foods are offered at meals and snacks
• Having routine meals and snacks
• Allowing children to decide how much to eat

Adapted from Ellyn Satter, Division of Responsibility
Core Nutrition Messages

- Research-based
- Audience-tested
- Consistent across programs
Family meals

Source: multiple articles in New Directions for Child and Adolescent Development, Spring 2006, Family Mealtime as a Context of Development and Socialization
Role modeling
Parenting style
Involving kids in food purchasing & preparation
Resources

• MyPlate for Preschoolers, http://www.choosemyplate.gov
• MyPlate 10 Tips handouts, http://www.choosemyplate.gov
• Core Nutrition Messages, http://www.fns.usda.gov/core-nutrition/core-nutrition-messages
What is one thing from this session that you plan to share or use with parents?