

## STRATEGIES TO MODEL HEALTHY EATING AT MEALTIME

WHAT YOU SAY TO THE CHILDREN AT MEALTIME REALLY MATTERS!

### 1. Make Specific Comments.

- » A specific phrase describing the taste and texture of the food helps point out the sensory qualities of the food. These phrases encourage children to explore and try new foods and help children learn new vocabulary to describe foods.

### 2. Be Enthusiastic!

- » By being excited about healthy eating, children will become motivated to try different foods.

### 3. Ask Questions.

- » By asking questions about food characteristics, you encourage thinking and exploration in children.

### 4. Use absolute comments by pairing a food at mealtime with its health benefit.

- » When offering a food to the child, pair it with its health benefit to encourage children to try the food from the list below. For example, "I drink milk because it makes my bones and muscles strong."

#### INSTEAD OF THIS

Circle phrases you currently use.

I like to try new foods.

Fruit is good at breakfast.

Fruit is okay.

Broccoli is good.

These carrots are hard.

Some vegetables have seeds.

These strawberries taste delicious when dipped in chocolate.

I like soy milk more than milk.

#### SAY THIS

Circle phrases to start using with children during mealtimes.

I've never had pineapple before, but I love sweet fruit and can't wait to taste it!

These mangoes look tender and juicy!

Mmm! I love bananas!

Cooked broccoli is delicious!

Do you hear the carrots crunch?

What do you see inside the cucumbers?  
Do the seeds of the cucumber or the grape peels taste different?

These strawberries have a bright red color and are so sweet and juicy! They give us energy!

I drink milk because it makes my bones and teeth strong!

The following are examples of phrases for pairing foods with their health benefit.



## GRAINS

The grain group includes wheat, rice, oats, bread and pasta.

**Health Tip:** Make at least half of your grains whole grains.

---

### Health Benefit Phrases

- » Give you energy!
- » Helps you learn!
- » Helps you jump high!
- » Helps you move!
- » Helps you run fast!



## DAIRY

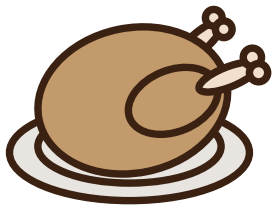
The dairy group includes milk, milk products like cheese and yogurt, and milk substitutes like soy milk and almond milk.

**Health Tip:** Choose fat-free or low fat milk, yogurt and cheese.

---

### Health Benefit Phrases

- » Makes bones strong!
- » Helps build muscle!
- » Helps you move!



## PROTEIN

The protein group includes meat, poultry, seafood, eggs, beans, lentils, soy products, nuts and seeds.

**Health Tip:** Go lean with protein.

---

### Health Benefit Phrases

- » Helps you grow!
- » Helps you build muscles!
- » Helps you learn!
- » Helps you jump high and run fast!
- » Helps you move!



## FRUITS AND VEGETABLES

The fruit and vegetable group includes all forms of fruits and vegetables from fresh, frozen and canned.

**Health Tip:** Make at least half your plate fruits and vegetables.

---

### Health Benefit Phrases

- » Make you feel good!
- » Are good for your heart!
- » Are good for your skin and will make your hair shiny!
- » Keep you from getting sick!
- » Protect the body from disease!