



A PARENTS GUIDE MEALTIME

The information in this brochure is provided as an education resource for parents by Schneider Children's Hospital and Kohl's Cares for Kids. Additional information is available on our website:

www.schneiderchildrenshospital.org

Schneider Children's Hospital and Kohl's Cares for Kids



Working together to make a difference for the kids in our communities.

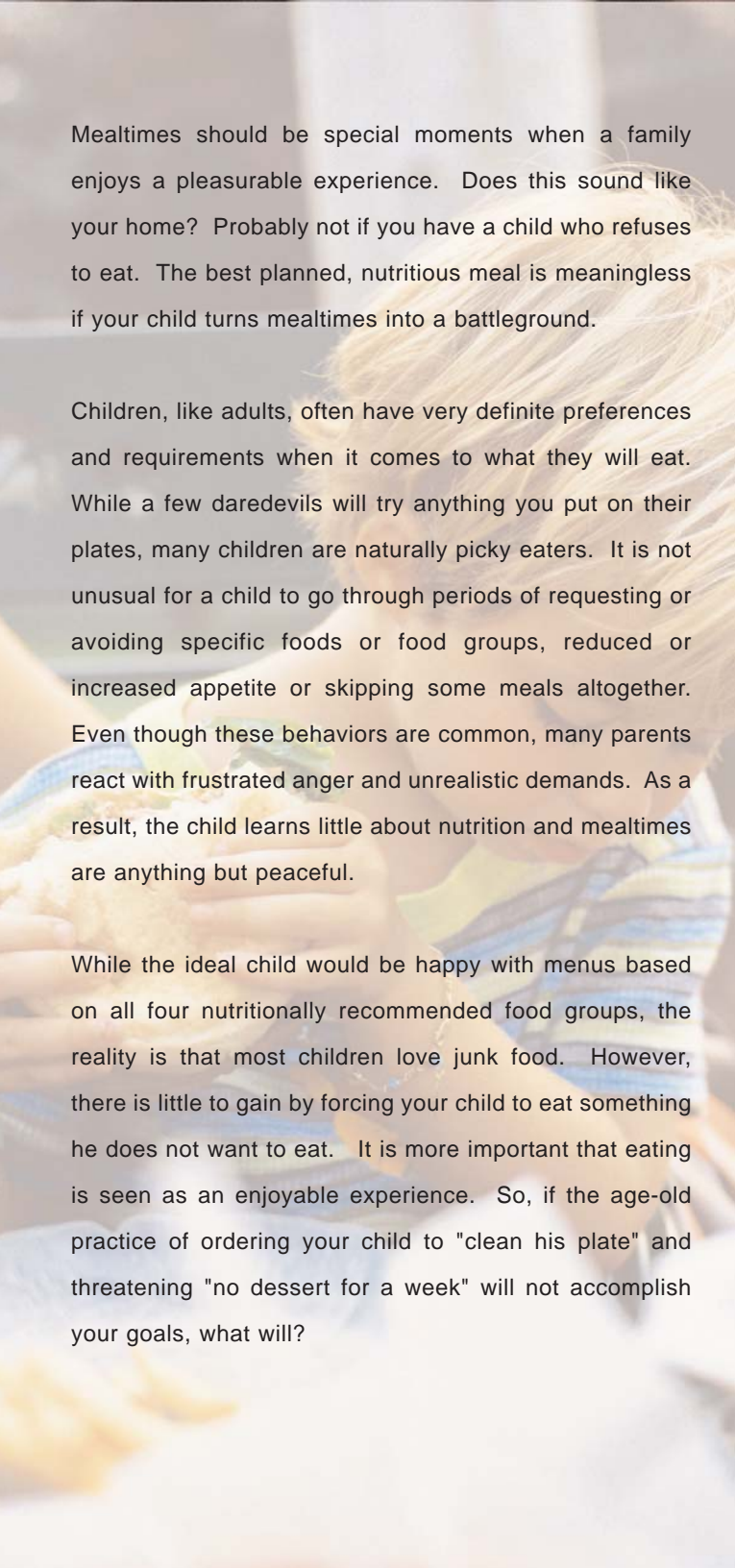


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Setting New Standards In Children's Healthcare
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Mealtimes should be special moments when a family enjoys a pleasurable experience. Does this sound like your home? Probably not if you have a child who refuses to eat. The best planned, nutritious meal is meaningless if your child turns mealtimes into a battleground.

Children, like adults, often have very definite preferences and requirements when it comes to what they will eat. While a few daredevils will try anything you put on their plates, many children are naturally picky eaters. It is not unusual for a child to go through periods of requesting or avoiding specific foods or food groups, reduced or increased appetite or skipping some meals altogether. Even though these behaviors are common, many parents react with frustrated anger and unrealistic demands. As a result, the child learns little about nutrition and mealtimes are anything but peaceful.

While the ideal child would be happy with menus based on all four nutritionally recommended food groups, the reality is that most children love junk food. However, there is little to gain by forcing your child to eat something he does not want to eat. It is more important that eating is seen as an enjoyable experience. So, if the age-old practice of ordering your child to "clean his plate" and threatening "no dessert for a week" will not accomplish your goals, what will?

The following tips are designed to help you teach your child to eat well and, hopefully, keep peace at your table.

- ♦ Rather than attempting to control your child, control the food that comes into your home. Choose healthy foods and snacks. If you are unsure as to proper nutrition, visit your local library or consult a professional nutritionist.
- ♦ Allow your child to choose which healthy foods to eat and how much of each.
- ♦ If your child is unable to eat enough in each sitting, offer smaller portions more frequently. Avoid appetite suppressing sodas or sugar-laden juice drinks.
- ♦ Set a good example for table manners and healthy eating.
- ♦ Try to eat meals as a family and keep conversations tuned to pleasant topics.
- ♦ Keep snacks healthful and at a minimum.
- ♦ When possible, encourage your child to help with meal preparation. Kids often enjoy eating something they helped make.
- ♦ Use some creativity in presenting your meals. For example, use cookie cutter shapes for sandwiches and add faces to pancakes. Your library has books to help you with these ideas.
- ♦ Praise your child for all efforts at eating in a healthy manner.
- ♦ Remember that proper exercise is also important, so take walks and bike rides with your child and reward him/her with an apple or some raisins for a snack. A child who exercises may have a better appetite.

If your child is growing at the proper rate, it is likely that his/her nutritional needs are being met. If you have any concerns, discuss them with your pediatrician.