

## Encouraging Healthy Eating Habits

- **Buy and serve more fruits and vegetables (fresh, frozen, canned, or dried).** Let your child choose them at the store.
- **Buy fewer soft drinks and high-fat or high-calorie snack foods like chips, cookies, and candy.** These snacks may be OK once in a while, but always keep healthy snack foods on hand. Offer the healthy snacks more often at snack times.
- **Make sure your child eats breakfast every day.** Breakfast may provide your child with the energy he or she needs to listen and learn in school. Skipping breakfast can leave your child hungry, tired, and looking for less healthy foods later in the day.
- **Eat fast food less often.** When you do visit a fast food restaurant, encourage your family to choose the healthier options, such as salads with low-fat dressing or small sandwiches without cheese or mayonnaise.
- **Offer your child water or low-fat milk more often than fruit juice.** Low-fat milk and milk products are important for your child's development. One hundred percent fruit juice is a healthy choice but is high in calories.
- **Limit the amount of saturated and *trans* fats in your family's diet.** Instead, obtain most of your fats from sources such as fish, vegetable oils, nuts, and seeds.
- **Plan healthy meals and eat together as a family.** Eating together at meal times helps children learn to enjoy a variety of foods.
- **Do not get discouraged if your child will not eat a new food the first time it is served.** Some kids will need to have a new food served to them 10 times or more before they will eat it.
- **Try not to use food as a reward when encouraging kids to eat.** Promising dessert to a child for eating vegetables, for example, sends the message that vegetables are less valuable than dessert. Kids learn to dislike foods they think are less valuable.



- **Start with small servings and let your child ask for more if he or she is still hungry.** It is up to you to provide your child with healthy meals and snacks, but your child should be allowed to choose how much food he or she will eat.
- **Be aware that some high-fat or high-sugar foods and beverages may be strongly marketed to kids.** Usually these products are associated with cartoon characters, offer free toys, and come in bright packages. Talk with your child about the importance of fruits, vegetables, whole grains, and other healthy foods—even if these foods are not often advertised on TV or in stores.

For more information on healthy eating, contact the Jefferson County Public Health, Margaret Lees Roldan, community nutritionist at 303-271-5781 or visit our Nutrition Services web page: [www.jeffco.us/public-health/healthy-families/nutrition-and-education/](http://www.jeffco.us/public-health/healthy-families/nutrition-and-education/)