



Children's
Healthcare of Atlanta

The No-Stress Way to Feed Your Family

The secret is to learn your Ps and Cs

Feeding your kids healthy meals and snacks might sound like a set-up for daily battles, but it doesn't have to be! Strong4Life has found a way parents can take control of better eating, without creating a family battle at the kitchen table.

The secret to no-stress feeding is to give yourself and your kids a few easy jobs. It all starts with parents setting simple guidelines and then trusting their children to make their own eating choices.

Parent's jobs—the 3 Ps

- Plan for a positive eating experience
- Prepare and put food on the table
- Provide with patience

Child's jobs—the 3 Cs

- Choose to eat
- Choose what to eat
- Choose how much to eat

Parent's jobs—the 3 Ps

Plan for a positive eating experience

- **Make a schedule** — Dish up good-for-them meals and snacks every three to four hours. That's enough to keep them feeling full; no need for additional food or drinks in between. (Although water is fine anytime!)
- **Plan ahead** — Decide what you'll serve. Make a list for grocery shopping and stick to it like glue!
- **Set rules and expectations for mealtime** — Sit together at the table and start teaching table manners.
- **Make mealtime pleasant** — Dinner is a great time to talk and be together. Make a real effort to power down by putting the toys and cell phones away and turning off TV and computers. Connect with your family instead.

Prepare and put food on the table

- **Prepare a variety of nutritious foods** — Serve at least two different veggies or fruits, and offer milk (1% or fat-free) or water to drink.
- **Get help** — Kids feel important when they can help make food and help set the table. Plus, they're more likely to eat something they helped make. Cooking is also a fun, no-pressure way to inspire kids to try new foods.



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Provide with patience

- **Be a role model** — Sit with your child, present foods positively and eat the foods you want your child to eat.
- **Let your child serve and feed himself** — Even at a young age, let him try. Kids love to smell and touch their food, so try not to worry about the mess. When little kids play with their food, they often wind up eating it!
- **Don't give up** — Kids might need to see a food up to 14 times before deciding to try it, so keep serving it! Offer new and previously refused foods, along with foods they usually eat.

Child's jobs—the 3 Cs

Choose to eat (or not to eat)

- **Let them decide** — Kids usually know when they need food. If they choose not to eat, calmly say, "Did you get enough to eat? Remember, we won't be eating again until dinner time."

Choose what to eat (from what the parent provides)

- **Offer, don't force** — No need to pressure or beg him to try something. It only sets up a power struggle. And remember, choosing what to eat (from the items you serve) falls under his job description.
- **Don't be a short order cook** — Beware of the feeling that you need to make kids something different to eat. What might seem like no big deal can easily turn into a bad habit, setting the stage for picky eating.

Choose how much to eat

- **Avoid the "Clean Plate Club"** — Don't panic, and don't say anything! When kids leave food on their plate, they're learning to recognize their own sense of hunger and fullness.
- **Do not use food as a reward or punishment** — No bribes either. "Finish your veggies if you want dessert!" just highlights sweets as the favorite over more nutritious foods.
- **Dessert is a treat** — Your kids may not agree, but you don't have to have dessert with every dinner. When you do serve dessert, one serving is plenty. And offer it to everyone...even if nobody ate their carrots.

Remember, *how we feed our families is just as important as what we feed our families.*

With just a little planning (and maybe just a little courage, too), you can set the table for success. With Strong4Life Ps and Cs, mealtime can be happier and healthier for your whole family!