

Tips & Tricks to Encourage a Healthy Relationship with Food for Children Under the Age of 6

Young children need to develop healthy eating habits early on. Children look to the caring adults around them for guidance and pattern habits after them. As caregivers, you play an important role in:



Creating a healthy food environment in your home.

Supporting a child's interest in healthy food.

Shaping the child's eating habits and behaviours.

1 Children are black and white thinkers.

Avoid labelling foods as "good food" and "bad food". Call food by its name (e.g. candy, broccoli, cake).

2 Allow a variety of foods including sweets.

Allowing regular access to sweets helps neutralize them as "just another food".

3 Focus on the body's function.

Teach children how to describe how their body feels and what it can do over what it looks like.

4 Avoid making negative comments about your own body.

Children internalize messages shared by trusted adults about appearance ideals and weight. Negative dialogue about your body can influence how a child feels about their own body.

5 Compliment children on things that have nothing to do with appearance.

Praise children on areas such as kindness, being a good friend or sibling, or creativity.

6 Show lots of love and remind children that their body is a good body regardless of size or shape.

Children who feel good in their bodies have better health outcomes.

Content developed by Jenn Messina. Jenn Messina is a Registered Dietitian based in beautiful Vancouver, BC. Jenn is passionate about all aspects of holistic health and practices through the lens of Health at Every Size® and Intuitive Eating. She works with individuals who are ready to break up with dieting and find balance and joy with food. She also works with families looking to support their children to have a healthy relationship with food and their bodies. Follow her on Instagram [@jennthedietitian](#) and visit her website at www.jennmessina.com