

Growing Little Minds By: Ingrid Lindal  
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### Encouraging Healthy Eating for Children



Adequate eating habits starting in the children's early years is essential to promote a healthy lifestyle. Proper childhood nutrition helps support the immune system, provides vitamins, minerals, ensures proper physical development, and helps the child sleep better. Healthy eating starts at home and here are some tips on how you can create an environment of adequate eating with your families.

1. **Shop for food together:** go to the grocery store and look at all the different vegetables and fruits, ask your child which one's they are curious about, investigate where the fruits come from. If possible, visit the farmer's market and ask them to explain where the fruits, vegetables and meat came from.
2. **Introduce new foods while modeling:** when trying new foods, it's important that your child see's that you like it as well. When eating, make the same plate for all the members of the family, you can say for example: this broccoli looks delicious, and it's green your favorite color! (If this is the case). Taste the new food and say it's sweet or soft, why don't you try it and let me know what you think.
3. **Make fun foods:** make your child's sandwiches into a lion, a snowman, a fish, any shape they enjoy by using cookie cutters.
4. **Involve them in the process:** let your children help you in the kitchen. They can help mix the ingredients, roll dough, put spices, etc. Talk about the different foods while cooking, what color are they, what texture and what they smell like.

These are some of the many activities you can do at home to encourage healthy eating. The USDA's The School Day Just Got Healthier website (<https://www.fns.usda.gov/cn/healthierschoolday>) offers more resources for families, educators and community members to make healthy eating a positive experience. If you have any questions or would like more ideas, you may contact me at my office number: 402-821-2151 or my email: [ilindalchavarria2@unl.edu](mailto:ilindalchavarria2@unl.edu). I serve Saline, Gage, Jefferson and the Southeast area.