

# Food Choices and Habits

**H**ealthy eating habits involve more than just learning how to choose healthy foods. Once families decide that healthy eating habits are an important part of life, they can take steps toward acquiring these habits.

**When to eat:** As obvious as it may seem, the best time to eat is when one is hungry. Eating only at regular intervals and less frequently as one grows older will promote healthy mental and physical strength. Avoid eating between meals or for entertainment. Have set meal times and avoid snacking.

**How much to eat:** Teach children to eat until they no longer feel hungry. Requiring them to finish everything on their plate can lead to over-eating, feeling stuffed, and gluttony. Children need to be trained to gauge their serving portions, as their eyes are often 'bigger than their stomachs' when they're hungry.

**How to eat:** Make the mealtime a pleasant family time. Teach positive communication and reinforce manners. Focus on teaching children the various manners expected of them so their public actions will be enjoyable and courteous.

**Where to eat:** Designate a consistent area for eating, e.g. at the table. Standing and moving while eating are key factors in child choking. For your child's safety, teach him or her to sit while eating.

**Food shopping with children:** Shopping with children can be a rich learning experience. Shop when children are fed and well-rested. Set clear expectations before you enter the store. Engage children in conversation while moving through the store, explaining the process of selection and choice. Watch for inappropriate behavior and head it off quickly. Compliment the children on their appropriate behavior and talk about any incidents that

may have occurred. What if the child misbehaves during a shopping trip? Remove the child from the public eye, even if that means leaving a full grocery cart at the checkout lane. A quick exit will do much to help improve future shopping trips.

**Healthful food choices:** Consider organic fruits and vegetables, non-dairy products, and meatless menu items. The less processed the food, the better it is for your body. Whole grains, legumes, vegetables, fruits, and nuts are all a delicious part of a healthful diet. Many people ask if it's always better to buy organic, as organic foods are often more expensive than non-organic. *The Environmental Working Group's 2011 Shopper's Guide* lists the 15 foods most contaminated by pesticides as better to buy organic: apples, celery, strawberries, peaches, spinach, nectarines, grapes, sweet bell peppers, potatoes, blueberries, lettuce, and kale/collard greens. The 15 fresh produce items least affected by pesticides are onions, corn, pineapples, avocado, asparagus, peas, mangoes, eggplant, cantaloupe, kiwi, cabbage, watermelon, sweet potatoes, grapefruit, and mushrooms.

**Model good food choices:** Good habits are *caught* more than *taught*. Consistently make good food choices in your life, inviting your child to join you positively. Think out loud about food advertisements to develop critical thinking skills and awareness of the effect of media on food choice. Begin eating with a prayer of thanks, connecting the daily eating habit with the giver of life and health, and the will to choose well.



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## IN THE BIBLE

When you go out to dinner with an influential person, mind your manners: Don't gobble your food, don't talk with your mouth full. And don't stuff yourself; bridle your appetite.

*Proverbs 23:1-3 (The Message)*

## LEARN MORE ONLINE

- Mealtime Manners  
[life.familyeducation.com/manners-and-values/parenting/34452.html](http://life.familyeducation.com/manners-and-values/parenting/34452.html)
- Adventist Lifestyle Matters Resources  
[lifestyl matters.com](http://lifestyl matters.com)
- Finding Local Food  
[localharvest.org](http://localharvest.org)
- Kraft Recipes for Vegetarians  
[kraftrecipes.com/recipes/dinner/top-10/vegetarian-recipes/main.aspx](http://kraftrecipes.com/recipes/dinner/top-10/vegetarian-recipes/main.aspx)
- Vegetarian Recipes from Around the World  
[ivu.org/recipes](http://ivu.org/recipes)
- Vegetarian Times  
[vegetariantimes.com](http://vegetariantimes.com)
- Vegetarian Nutrition  
[vegetarian-nutrition.info](http://vegetarian-nutrition.info)

## INTERESTING EATING HABITS

- Observing and discussing eating habits of various animals provides a great opportunity to discuss God's care for all living things and good eating habits for humans. Discuss eating habits while visiting a zoo, walking in nature, or viewing animals on film/online together (e.g. *10 animals with interesting eating habits*, [tinyurl.com/7np8frj](http://tinyurl.com/7np8frj)).
- Learn about cultural eating habits by asking an older relative about their favorite foods while growing up, and how they prepared food. Learn how food options have changed with global transporting; consider the advantages and disadvantages of convenience foods today.

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