

## Better Together Tips

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### Planning Tips

- Include kids in planning meals. The whole process of shopping and cooking together is strongly linked to eating meals together.
- Keep it simple! No matter what your cooking skills are, you can always prepare something with your kids. That could be as simple as making tuna or cheese sandwiches!
- To please everyone, take turns picking meals when planning your weekly menu.

### Shopping Tips

- Include kids in making a grocery list.
- Take kids with you to the grocery store on the weekend. This exposes them to a wide array of vegetables and fruit and other produce. As they become familiar with these foods they will be more likely to want to try cooking and eating them.
- Kids can write and read the grocery list at the store

### Cooking Tips

- Be ready to share the kitchen with your kids. Expect spills and some mess. That is part of the learning and experience.
- Start on a weekend when you have extra time. Friday night or Sunday brunch are good times for many families to cook together.
- Cooking is teamwork. That means everyone needs to be included in the cooking and the cleaning.
- Be patient and relax! Kids need to practice and will get better at cooking with time and be able to help you in the weekdays.
- Set up some kitchen safety rules. These rules, however, should not take away the fun from cooking, but rather make sure kids are aware of the basic rules that will prevent accidents and make the experience enjoyable for all.
- Have an adult supervisor with kids at all times.
- Do not short-order cook! Introduce new items with familiar ones. Assemble ingredients and equipment on the counter before starting to ensure a smooth and fun cooking session.
- Review recipe with your kids. Introduce any new cooking terms, utensils or foods.
- Be FOOD SAFE.

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### Eating Tips

- You decide WHAT, WHEN and WHERE food is served. Kids decide WHETHER and HOW MUCH to eat. Kids who help prepare food are more likely to taste it and eat it. For more feeding tips, check <http://www.healthlinkbc.ca/healthfiles/hfile69d.stm>
  - Set up regular times for meals and snacks to ensure kids are hungry and ready to eat when it is time for meals.
  - Serve food family-style. Let children serve themselves as much as they want. Research shows that kids who serve themselves eat fewer calories than kids who are served food on the plate. That is because they are able to self-regulate and listen to their internal hunger and satiety cues.  
Fisher JO, Rolls BJ, and Birch LL. Am J Clin Nutr, 77(5): 1164-1170; 2003.
  - Wait until everyone is seated before starting to eat.
  - Turn off the TV and phones.
  - Keep the experience pleasant by talking about fun topics that kids can participate in.
  - Don't force kids to taste new foods. Research shows that kids need about 8-10 exposures to a food before they are willing to taste it. Research also shows that kids who are pressured to taste food are less likely to try it again on their own later.
- Don't force kids to clean their plates. Kids have a natural ability to self-regulate. Forcing them to finish their plate interferes with this critical self-regulatory skill. If you let your children serve themselves, food leftovers are less likely to be an issue.
  - Don't offer foods such as chocolate and desserts as rewards for eating meals. Be relaxed and treat all foods equally. It helps develop healthy attitudes towards foods.
  - Have wipes handy. It is normal for kids, especially preschoolers, to spill some foods as they feed themselves. Things will improve as their motor skills improve.

### Cleaning tips

- Get everyone involved in cleaning up.
- Divide tasks and responsibilities. Younger kids can help bring their plates back to the sink or put away condiments. Older kids and teens can help wash the dishes, scrape the dishes, load the dishwasher, and empty the dishwasher when the cycle is done.