Today’s children have different options for food and play than children had in the past. Sadly, many food choices contain more calories and fewer nutrients than a child needs to grow healthy. Preschoolers also have fewer chances to play and develop movement skills.

1 **choose a variety of foods**
Choose foods with many flavors, colors, textures, and aromas to expand your child’s food choices. Offer new foods at the beginning of a meal paired with a familiar food item and avoid forcing your child to eat. Offer choices. Ask “Which would you like for dinner, broccoli or cauliflower?” instead of “Do you want broccoli for dinner?”

2 **make meals together**
Plan together. Shop together. Cook together. Ask about and include some of your preschooler’s choices when planning meals. Allow them to invent new snacks and name them something fun such as, “Power-packed peas” or “Hector’s Hummus”. Ask your child to help prepare part of the meal, choose healthy options at the store, or set the table.

3 **offer the same food for everyone**
Don’t be a “short-order cook” by making different dishes to please children. It’s easier to plan family meals when everyone eats the same foods.

4 **reward with attention, not food**
Show your love with hugs and kisses. Comfort with hugs and talks. Choose not to offer sweets as rewards.

5 **focus on each other at the table**
Talk about fun and happy things at mealtime. Turn off the television. Set phones aside. Try to make eating meals a stress-free time.
6 listen to your child
If your child says he or she is hungry, offer a small, healthy snack. Snack portions may depend on when the next scheduled meal is (e.g. a piece of cheese 30 minutes before dinner). Do not make your child finish everything on the plate; they learn by serving themselves. Teach children to take small portions. Use large utensils to make it easier.

7 use positive body language
Instead of negative talk, speak positively about people’s bodies and appearances (including your own)! Model a healthy self-concept to your preschooler. “Look at me. I am big and tall. I like to eat healthy and be active too.” All bodies are shaped differently, making each one unique. Promoting acceptance of different shapes helps your preschooler develop positive feelings about her body.

8 limit screen-time
Allow no more than 2 hours a day of screen time like TV and computer games. Get up and move during commercials to get some physical activity.

9 be active together
Make physical activity fun for the whole family. Involve your children in the planning. Walk, run, and play with your child - instead of sitting on the sidelines. Use safety gear like bike helmets.

10 be a good role model
Children take their lead from you. Make healthy food and activity choices for yourself. Do not follow fad diets for weight loss; instead choose from a variety of foods that are tasty and satisfying, including vegetables, whole grains, and fruits. Eat only when you are hungry; stop when you are satisfied. Accept your own body shape and size.

REFERENCES