

Having a healthy relationship with food means enjoying a wide variety of foods without feeling any guilt or intimidation around certain foods.

How we perceive food as adults stems from our childhood experiences with food. The more positive our experiences around food as a child, the more likely we are to have a healthy relationship with food as an adult.

Children start forming their relationships with food from birth and are influenced by their families and carers.



Tips to help children have a healthy relationship with food

- Offer children a wide variety of age-appropriate foods.
- Remember that there is more to food than just taste!
 - children also rely on smell to determine if food is appealing
 - children use visual cues to decide if a food tastes good or not, including the reactions of others to that food.
 - previous positive experiences with healthy food such as in stories and songs or art and craft can create positive perceptions of those foods even if they have not been tried before.
- Eat with children – show them how to eat a wide variety of foods. Children are looking to adults for cues on how to eat and this assists with the development of table manners too.
- Avoid using words like ‘good’ or ‘bad’ when discussing food. Choose words like ‘everyday’ or ‘sometimes’ instead.
- Avoid any focus on weight – children can learn quickly that excess weight is undesirable or unattractive from parent’s comments. This can lead to poor body image as an older child, teenager and adult. Use words like ‘strong’ and ‘healthy’ to describe bodies.
- Expect some fussy eating from children – it can take up to 15 - 20 tastes of a new food for it to become accepted.
- Allow children to have some input on meal choices and involve them in the preparation of the meal. Small children can help set the table and older children can assist with chopping and peeling vegetables.
- Keep calm and aim for relaxed mealtime.



Do you want to know more about healthy eating? We are here to help!

Visit www.actnss.org today