

LET'S TALK

Mealtime Conversation Cards for Toddlers & Preschoolers

BENEFITS

of eating together

- Provides children with a pleasurable, social experience to learn new skills through positive role modeling.
- Children are more likely to try and enjoy a variety of foods.
- Can improve diet quality, healthy eating habits, and mental wellbeing.

EXPLORE

the 5 senses at the table

Sight: What colour or shape is it?

Hearing: Is it loud, crunchy, slurpy?

Touch: Is it soft, hard, squishy, cold?

Smell: Does it smell yummy, sweet, burnt?

Taste: Is it sweet, spicy, sour, or salty?

PRINT: Double Sided (flip on long edge)

LET'S TALK

Mealtime conversation cards for toddlers & preschoolers

CONNECT

at meals

- Turn off screens and limit distractions to enjoy meaningful conversation.
- For children under 2 years old, screen time is not recommended at all.
- For children 2-4 years old, screen time should be limited to less than 1 hour per day.

OTHER IDEAS

to try during family meal time

- Practice using numbers and letters. Ex "A is for apple, B is for bread..."
- Name and describe foods on the table.
- Where does this food come from or how was it made?
- Make up a song or story using the foods on the table.
- Make up fun names for your meals like "ants on a log," "toad in the hole" or "sunshine toast."

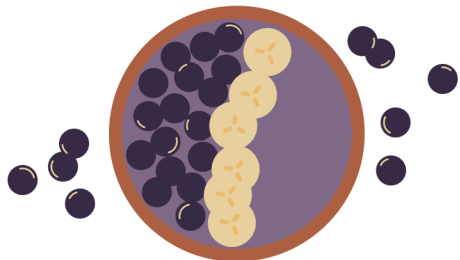
1. Choose a card

2. Read out loud

3. Get talking!

PRINT: Double Sided (flip on long edge)

WHAT DO YOU LIKE
TO EAT FOR
BREAKFAST?



When I was a child, my
favourite breakfast was...
(tell a story)

WHAT COLOUR IS
YOUR TOOTHPASTE?



If you could make your
toothpaste a different
colour, what would it be?

DO YOU EAT
YOGURT WITH A
SPOON OR FORK?



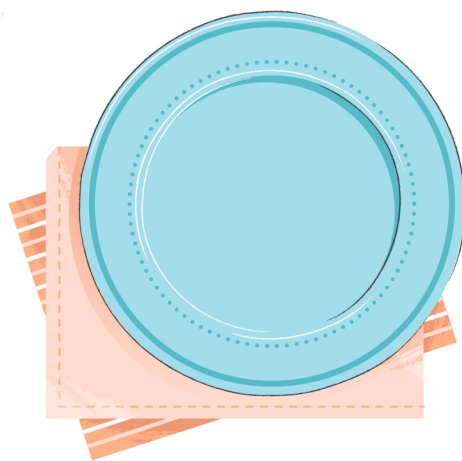
What are some foods we
can add to yogurt?

WHAT IS CHEESE
MADE FROM?

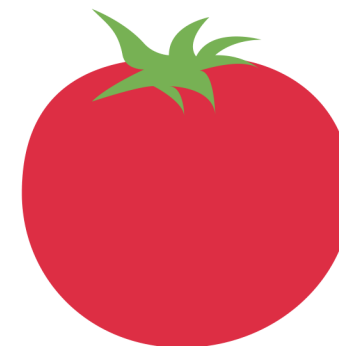


Milk

WHAT FOODS DID
YOU PUT ON YOUR
PLATE?



WHAT DO TOMATOES
TASTE LIKE?



Are they sweet, sour, tart?

Brush children's teeth with a fluoride toothpaste twice a day to remove decay-causing bacteria.

This helps protect children's teeth against tooth decay.

Children and parents share the responsibility of eating. **Never force a child to eat.**

Adults decide:

- What foods to offer
- When to offer
- Where to offer

Children decide:

- Whether or not to eat
- How much to eat

Offer vegetables or fruit with every meal and snack.

Foods that are choking hazards, like grapes, raw carrots, or small tomatoes, should be chopped into small pieces.

Kids are more likely to eat breakfast when parents eat breakfast with them.

Kids who eat meals with their families have a stronger sense of belonging.

Children need an adult to help them brush their teeth until they are 8 years old. Use fluoride toothpaste twice each day.

Children under 3 years old:
use a grain of rice sized amount.

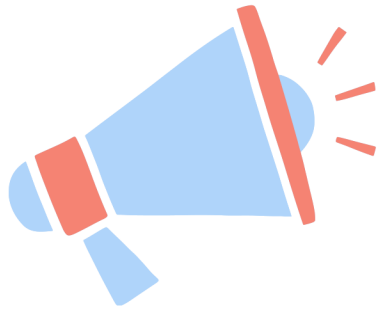
Children 3 years old & over:
Use a pea-sized amount.

You can teach your child to eat by sharing meals together.

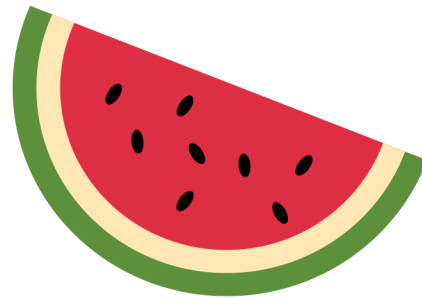
Expect a mess when your child is learning to eat.

Offer foods that are easy to pick up with fingers or a spoon.

SHARE A FUNNY
STORY OR MEMORY



WHAT COLOUR IS THE
INSIDE OF A
WATERMELON?



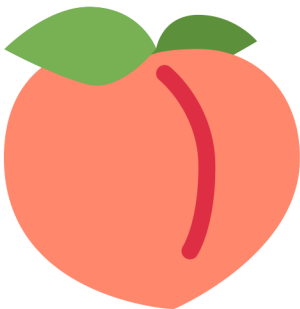
"Yes, it's red with
black/white seeds"

WHAT FRUIT IS USED
TO MAKE RAISINS?



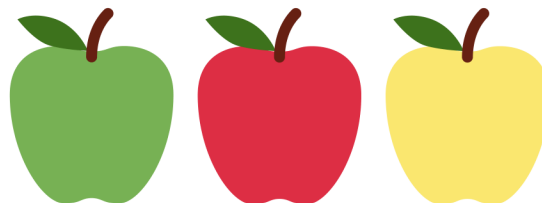
Grapes

WHAT DOES A PEACH
FEEL LIKE?



Does your skin feel like a
peach?

DO YOU LIKE RED,
GREEN, OR YELLOW
APPLES?



IS CELERY CRUNCHY
OR SOFT?



Children enjoy learning new words.

Adults can help kids to expand their vocabulary by naming and describing the objects around them and what they are doing.

Adults can also talk about what items are used for and where they come from.

Toddlers communicate with body language and words.

Provide a variety of foods and let the child decide whether to eat and how much to eat.

If your child does not eat vegetables:

- Eat vegetables with your child (modeling)
- Continue to offer often
- Offer raw vegetables with dip
- Offer different shapes (shredded or sliced)
- Offer fruit
- Don't coax/pressure

Toddlers rely on their parents to teach them new words.

When adults share stories with children, they learn how to tell stories too.

Children learn new words when they hear adults use them at least 3 times.

To help build language skills, use the "match + one" method: when your child makes a comment, repeat what they have said and add a new word or idea to it.

Foods that are sticky or sweet increase the risk of cavities. Frequent eating or drinking of these foods increases the time that they're on your child's teeth.

Limit how often sticky or sweet foods are offered (meal or snack times only).

HOW DO YOU MIX A SALAD?



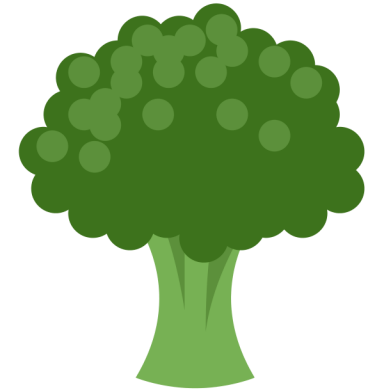
Do the motion with your hands.

I SPY GAME WITH YOUR SOUP



I spy with my little eye
(name a vegetable in the soup/stew).

BROCCOLI LOOKS LIKE LITTLE TREES!



How many trees are on your plate? Let's count.

I AM ROUND AND ORANGE AND LIKE TO COME OUT DURING THE FALL.
WHAT AM I?



Pumpkin

WHAT SOUND DO DINOSAURS MAKE?



How do you think dinosaurs keep their teeth clean?

WHERE DOES WATER COME FROM?



Rain, snow caps, rivers, oceans, lakes...

Children understand words before they can say them.

Talk and sing to your child. Listen for the sounds that your child makes.

Repeat sounds back to your child and have fun imitating each other.

Tooth brushing will not clean areas where teeth touch each other. These areas are at risk for tooth decay.

Flossing helps remove plaque and food between teeth and under the gum line. Floss picks are easy to use when flossing a child's teeth.

Choose water most often to quench thirst.

Soft drinks, juice, fruit drinks, and sports drinks contain acids which dissolve tooth enamel and cause cavities. Diet drinks & bubbly/ sparkling water do not contain sugar, but they still contain acids that can harm teeth.

Use lots of action words (verbs) when you're cooking and eating with your child.

Examples:

- Can you stir the batter?
- Let's slurp the noodles.
- Can you help mash these potatoes?

Children may need to see a new food up to **20 times** or more before they will taste it.

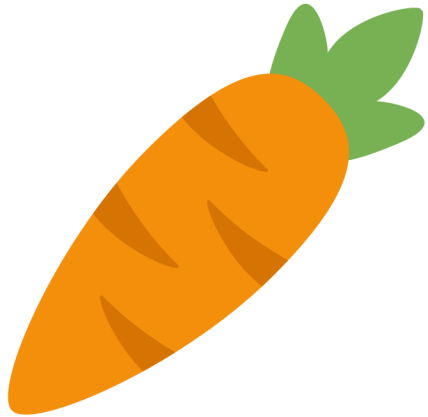
Even if your child does not try a new food, continue to offer it without pressure.

Serve a new food along with foods that your child likes to eat.

Play and language go hand in hand.

Pretend play encourages language skills, literacy, thinking, and imagination.

WHERE DO CARROTS
GROW?

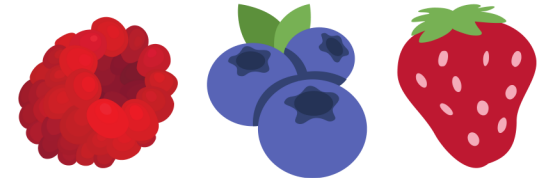


ARE BANANAS SOFT
OR HARD?



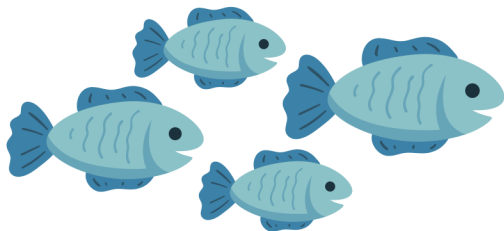
Do we eat the peel?

BERRIES CAN BE
SWEET AND ARE
DIFFERENT COLOURS.
WHAT IS YOUR
FAVOURITE BERRY?



Let's name all the berries
we know.

IF YOU COULD BE A
TYPE OF FISH, WHAT
WOULD YOU BE?



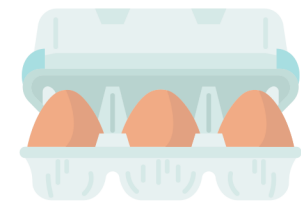
Where do fish live?

AFTER OUR MEAL,
SHOW ME YOUR
DANCE MOVES!



Put on some music.

I AM SOMETIMES
BROWN, WHITE &
EVEN GREEN. MY
SHELL IS DELICATE. IF
YOU DROP ME, I WILL
BREAK. WHAT AM I?



Eggs

Children need healthy fat in their diet for growth and development.

Fish such as salmon, sardines, mackerel, and halibut are good sources of healthy fats.

Other good sources are peanut & nut butters, seeds, and avocados.

Children 1 to 4 years old need at least 3 hours of physical activity each day.

Any activity that gets your kids moving counts like crawling, hopping, running, dancing, and climbing!

Protein helps build strong bodies.

Eggs are a great source of protein, iron, and vitamins.

Other good sources of protein are meat, tofu, fish, beans, and lentils.

Talk to your toddler using simple sentences. Ask "what" or "where" questions often.

To help your child's brain development, play or read together instead of letting your child watch TV or play games on a screen.

A parent's role is to offer 3 meals and 2-3 snacks each day. If a child refuses to eat, a skipped meal/snack will not harm them.

Remove uneaten food without comment. Do not force a child to eat.

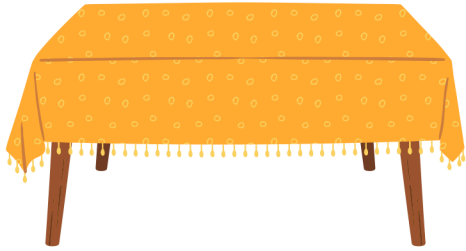
Offer a healthy snack in a couple of hours.

Some cherished traditional foods in Canada are berries, fish, wild game, seafood, roots and plants.

Traditional foods vary between community, culture, family, and season.

Talk to you children about your family's or culture's traditional foods.

WHICH FOODS
WOULD YOU LIKE AT
A FEAST?



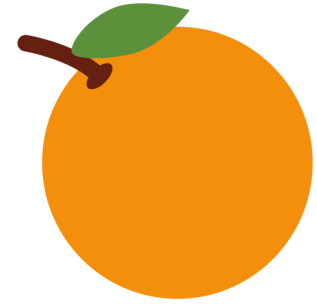
Who would you invite?

WHAT ANIMALS LIVE
IN THE SAND AT THE
BEACH?



Clams

I'M JUICY AND SWEET.
I'M ROUND LIKE THE
SUN. WHAT AM I?



Orange

LET'S SING THE SONG
"TEDDY-BEAR'S
PICNIC"



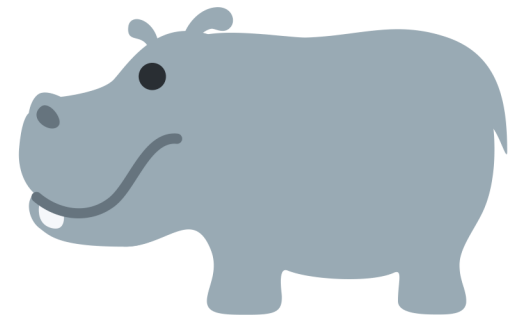
What would you bring on
a picnic?

LET'S DRAW OUR
FAVOURITE SNACK
AFTER WE EAT



What did you draw?
Why is that your favourite?

HOW MANY TEETH DO
YOU THINK A
HIPPOPOTAMUS HAS?



36

Scan me for song



Put the song on and sing together.

It's okay if you don't know all of the words.

If your child will not eat what is served and asks you to make something else...

Tell your child that you hope they can find something to eat from the foods on the table. Don't force or coax them to eat. Offer a nutritious meal/snack in 2-3 hours.

Bacteria can be passed from caregivers to children by sharing spoons, food, drinks, toothbrushes, or licking soothers.

This bacteria can cause tooth decay.

Have a separate toothbrush for every person.

Feasting connects family, friends, food, and culture.

It is a time when community comes together to celebrate, share, learn, and mourn.

Your child learns to eat when you eat the same foods together.

Don't expect your child to eat foods that you don't eat.

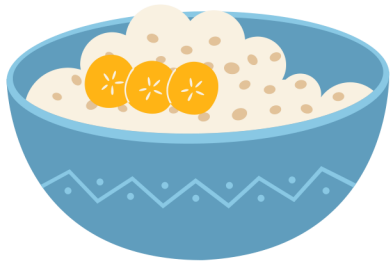
You are their role model.

Toddlers and young children do not need juice. If serving juice, limit to 1/2 cup (125 mL) per day with a meal or snack.

Water is the best drink to quench thirst.

Milk should be offered at meals and snacks only.

ONE IS TOO HOT, ONE
IS TOO COLD, ONE IS
JUST RIGHT.
WHAT AM I?



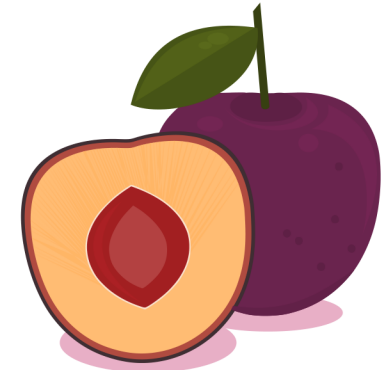
Porridge

IF CAULIFLOWER
COULD TALK, WHAT
WOULD IT SAY?



What kind of voice would
it have?

WHAT IS IN THE
MIDDLE OF A PLUM?



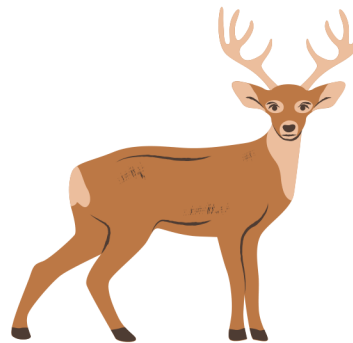
A pit (seed for a new
plant).

DO YOU KNOW WHAT
THE MARKS ON THE
OUTSIDE OF A
STRAWBERRY ARE?



Seeds! Each berry has ~200.

CAN YOU NAME TYPES
OF WILD MEAT?



Deer, elk, caribou, moose...
Have you ever tasted any?

LET'S NAME AS MANY
GREEN VEGETABLES
AS WE CAN THINK OF!



Picking berries and other fruits and vegetables is a great way for children to learn where food comes from.

Berry picking helps children develop coordination and patience.

Children also learn to respect the land.

Talk to children about food traditions from your own family and culture and what they mean to you.

Share food together and create memories for a lifetime!

Taking turns promotes conversation.

Encourage "turn taking" with your child. Strive for about 5 turns in a conversation.

Cooking together is a great way to teach your child important life skills.

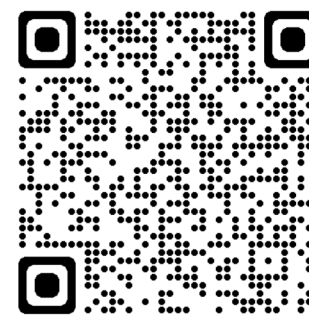
Young children can help with simple tasks like stirring, mashing, and rolling.

Older children can learn to read and follow simple recipes.

Between 18 and 24 months, there is a surge in language learning.

By 24 months, a toddler knows at least 50 words and can begin to form 2-word sentences like "want book" or "more milk."

Offer foods from Canada's Food Guide for meals & snacks.



WHAT DO YOU LIKE
TO DO OUTSIDE?



HOW MANY TEETH DO
YOU HAVE?



Count out loud.

WHAT SHAPES DO
MUSHROOMS GROW
IN?



If you see a mushroom
growing outside, should you
eat it? NO

WHAT ANIMALS
WOULD YOU HAVE ON
A FARM?



RESOURCES

[Island Health](#)



[HealthLink BC](#)



[Appetite to Play](#)



Have fun making your own question and write it down on this card.

Add your own picture.

Offer iron-rich foods at least 2 times each day. Iron grows bodies and minds.

Iron-rich foods include fish, red meat, chicken, iron-fortified baby cereal, beans, and legumes.

RESOURCES

[BC 211](#)



[Unlock Food](#)



[Email a Dietitian](#)



Young children have small appetites, and high calorie needs for growth, activity, and development.

Offer meals and snacks at regular times each day.

Babies should see a dentist or dental hygienist within 6 months of their first tooth coming in or by 1 year of age.

Children from families that receive Premium Assistance for their BC Medical Service Plan (MSP) may have dental coverage under the Healthy Kids Program. Call your local health unit to learn more.

Continue to offer foods that your child has rejected at meal and snack times.

You may need to offer a food 20 times or more before your child eats it.

Don't pressure, coax, or reward children to eat.