

Make mealtime family learning time



Family Literacy Week
January 25 – February 1, 2026

Mealtime can be a valuable learning time when families include shared activities, conversations and mindful eating practices. Cooking together can be a fun and engaging activity that strengthens family bonds and builds literacy skills.

Why do this as a family?

Frequent family meals help children build developmental and social skills. Spending time with your children at the dining table and inviting them to help with meal prep can encourage them to try new things. It is important to expose children to different tastes and textures. This helps build motor skills like stirring, pouring and using utensils, all while enjoying being present and engaged together.

Key Messages:

Mealtime activities can build a range of skills, from language and literacy to healthy eating habits.

- Parents can help their children develop lifelong skills and healthy eating habits.
- Children's literacy skills are developed through daily routine.
- Literacy is part of everyday life.

What can children learn during mealtimes?

Language

- New words and ways to describe food like "bitter", "sour" and "crunchy"
- Oral communication skills as they learn to express likes and dislikes
- Names of new foods
- Following simple instructions

Thinking skills

- Decision making, including what and how much to eat
- Concepts such as size, pattern, sequence, colour, number, taste, texture and sound

Food safety

- Washing hands before and after handling food
- Safe cutting skills

Physical development

- Trying different foods for a balanced diet
- Feeding themselves and preparing food as they build small muscle control and coordination
- Healthy eating habits that support overall physical growth

Social-emotional skills

- Confidence from trying things on their own
- Eating together connects them to other people
- Family traditions and culture

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Where can I learn more about healthy eating for children?

- [Food Guides and Healthy Eating](#). Government of Canada.
- Acosta, J., & Cowie, T. (2010). Recipes. The Westcoast Reader. <https://thewestcoastreader.com/wp-content/uploads/2024/08/BestOfTheReader-Recipes.pdf>
- Ministry of Healthy Living and Sport, & 2010 Legacies Now. (2008). Food Flair: A LEAP BC™ early learning practitioners' resource [Guidebook]. https://decoda.ca/wp-content/uploads/Food-FLAIR-English-Book_lowres.pdf
- Root, L., George, S., & Nashkewa, A. (2004). Cooking. Ningwakwe Learning Press.
- Brown, Y. K., British Columbia. Ministry of Education, S. and T., Canada. National Literacy Secretariat., Open Learning Agency, & Heiltsuk College. (1997). Traditional Heiltsuk food. Ministry of Education, Skills and Training, Province of British Columbia.



References

- Government of Canada. (2025). Canada's food guide. <https://food-guide.canada.ca/en/>
- HealthLink BC. (2023, March 1). Healthy eating: Helping your child learn healthy eating habits. <https://www.healthlinkbc.ca/healthwise/healthy-eating-helping-your-child-learn-healthy-eating-habits>
- ZERO TO THREE. (2010, March 5). Healthy from the start: How feeding nurtures your young child's body, heart and mind. <https://www.zerotothree.org/wp-content/uploads/2010/03/Healthy-from-the-Start-1.pdf>

