



NU33 Caregivers shall sit at the table and shall eat the meal or supplement (snack) with the children. Family-style meal service shall be encouraged. The adult(s) shall encourage social interaction and conversation about the concepts of color, quantity, number, and temperature of food; eating behaviors; and events of the day.

FAMILY-STYLE SERVICE

Serve meals family style to children. Some care providers think this is too messy, but it provides an important learning activity for children. **NU33** This means setting the table and placing the food in serving dishes on the table. Place enough food on the table to meet the minimum requirements for all children seated at the table and to feed the adults. Offer at least the minimum to all children during the meal.



Help children learn to serve themselves. This allows children to decide how much they will eat and prevents waste. Use small, lightweight containers that children can handle.

An adult caregiver should sit at the table with the children and eat what they are eating. This caregiver should help the children talk about events of the day, eating behaviors, and the foods they are eating—their color, quantity, shape, texture, and temperature.

Conversation helps the children develop their language and motor skills and makes the

mealtime more pleasant. Having children eat in this kind of atmosphere allows them to learn from the caregiver and from the other children. **NU33**

The adult should not eat or drink anything that the children are not allowed to have. If adults want sodas or coffee, they should drink them on their breaks and out of the sight of the children.

CHILDREN'S DECISIONS

Caregivers and children each have responsibilities related to eating. Remember, you are responsible for the type of food that is bought, how the food is prepared, when the food is served, and the environment in which the meal is served. Children are responsible for what and how much they eat.



areas while hot food is being prepared. **NU67** Supervise older children carefully when they are in the kitchen. Put pot handles toward the back of the stove. **NU37**

Do not drink hot liquids in the child care area. Keep coffee and other hot liquids and hot foods out of the reach of infants and young children. Do not place items, especially hot ones, where they could be pulled down by children—at the edge of a counter or table, or on a tablecloth. **NU37**

SOCIAL ENVIRONMENT

Children need a pleasing social environment when they eat. Young children like to be involved with what is going on around them. Children can help with setting the table, serving the food, and cleaning the table. **NU34**

Mealtimes should be happy times. Encourage children to eat the nutritious foods you provide, but do not force them to eat. **NU45** Don't use food (such as candy) as a reward. Don't deny dessert as a punishment. **NU46** A child who is rewarded or punished with food may overeat or believe that sweets are special foods. A child who is rewarded frequently with sweets may have an increased risk of dental cavities.

Allow young children to feed themselves even if they make a mess. They need to explore the foods they are eating. This does not mean letting them play in their food. When they begin to play, they are no longer interested in eating. Toddlers need lots of practice to learn to finger feed, use a spoon, and drink from a glass or cup. Try to balance learning new skills with enjoying eating.

Give children enough time to eat. Talk with children while they eat. Set simple rules for children at the table. You and the other children need a peaceful mealtime, too. Encourage children to eat new foods, and expect that they will learn to like them.

NU67 Children younger than school age shall be restricted from hot food preparation areas during meal preparation.

NU37 Adults shall not consume hot liquids in child care areas. Coffee and other hot liquids and hot foods shall be placed out of the reach of infants, toddlers, and preschoolers. Hot liquids shall not be placed at the edge of a counter or table, or on a tablecloth that could be yanked down, while the adult is holding or working with a child. Pot handles shall be positioned toward the back of the stove.

NU34 Children shall be actively involved in serving food and other mealtime activities, such as setting and cleaning the table.

NU45 A child shall be encouraged, but not forced, to eat.

NU46 Food shall not be used as a reward or punishment.



NU39 One adult shall not feed more than three children at the same time.

NU40 Midinfancy children just learning to feed themselves shall be supervised by an adult who is seated at the same table or adjacent to the child's feeding chair.

NU31 All furniture and eating utensils shall be age-appropriate and developmentally suitable for children, with special equipment provided for children with disabilities.

NU64 Disposable plates and cups and plastic utensils of food-grade, medium weight, may be used for single service. They are to be discarded after use. Styrofoam cups and plates shall not be used.

NU63 Dishes shall have smooth, hard-glazed surfaces and shall be free from cracks or chips. If imported dishes are purchased, they must carry a certificate of compliance with U.S. standards. Imported ceramic dishware or pottery shall be tested by the local health authority for lead or other heavy metals before use.

NU35 Children shall be offered familiar foods that are typical of the children's culture and shall also be introduced to unfamiliar foods.

NU61 Microwave ovens shall be so located as to be inaccessible to, and unable to be used by, children.

NU62 Heating units for warming bottles and food shall be accessible to adults but not to children. Microwave ovens shall not be used for warming infant bottles or infant food.

Caregivers should feed no more than three very young children at one time in order to supervise them properly. ^{NU39} Be sure to feed each child with his own utensils. An adult caregiver should supervise young children who are just learning to feed themselves. This person should sit at the same table or next to the child's feeding chair. ^{NU40} This promotes safety and security, and the caregiver can serve as a role model for eating. Never leave young children unattended while they are eating.

Dishes

Use child-size plates, utensils, glasses, and cups that are durable and easy to hold. ^{NU31} Use glasses and cups that are made of rigid plastic or some other unbreakable material. Use short-handled spoons for toddlers learning to feed themselves. These are easier to grasp and control.

You may use sturdy plastic utensils for single service. Throw them away after use. Do not use foam plates and cups. Children might bite off pieces of foam and choke. ^{NU64}

Use dishes that have smooth, hard-glazed surfaces. Do not use dishes that are cracked or chipped. If you buy imported dishes, be sure they meet U.S. standards. Have them tested for lead or other heavy metals before using them. Call your local health department to find out how to have them tested. ^{NU63}

Foods

When you serve a new food, serve it with some familiar foods. Serve foods from different cultures to help teach children about new foods. ^{NU35} For each meal, try to serve foods that have a variety of shapes, colors, flavors, and textures. You can change the shape of a food by cutting it in different ways or change the texture by serving it cooked if you usually serve it raw.

Do not serve foods that can cause choking in young children (see Chapter 3, page 13). Cut food so that it is easy for children to chew and swallow.

Surroundings

Keep microwave ovens, bottle warmers, and food warmers out of children's reach and do not allow children to use them. ^{NU61, NU62} Keep young children out of food preparation

PROMOTING PLEASANT MEALS AND SNACKS



Besides making sure the food is clean and safe, preparing the food properly, and providing children with the right kind of food for their ages and development, always give children a pleasant setting in which to eat. You can do many things to help children enjoy their meals and snacks.

PHYSICAL ENVIRONMENT

Children need a safe and comfortable place to eat. Children enjoy feeding themselves if they have the eating utensils or tools they need to do it correctly. Furniture and eating utensils should be the right size and shape for children's age and development. ^{NU31}

Seating

Babies who can sit up need a highchair or a chair that clips under the table. Toddlers may still need to sit in one of these chairs. Never leave a child alone in a highchair, even to go to the phone or the door.

Older children need small tables and chairs to feel comfortable. When children are seated, the table should be between waist and mid-chest level and the chairs should allow the children's feet to rest on the floor or a firm surface. ^{NU30}

Insist that children sit down while they are eating. To reduce the risk of choking, don't let children eat while watching TV, walking, running, playing, lying down, or riding in a car. ^{NU32} This also helps children learn that eating is an important activity. It is not something to be done while doing other things. Make sure that young children do not carry bottles around with them—this could be dangerous if the child drops the bottle and it breaks or if the child carries the bottle so long that the milk spoils. Never prop a bottle for an infant to nurse. ^{NU11}

NU31 All furniture and eating utensils shall be age-appropriate and developmentally suitable for children, with special equipment provided for children with disabilities.

NU30 Child care staff shall ensure that children who do not require high chairs are comfortably seated at tables that are between waist and mid-chest level and allow the child's feet to rest on a firm surface while seated for eating.

NU32 Child care staff shall ensure that children do not eat when walking, running, playing, lying down, or riding in vehicles.

NU11 Infants shall either be held or be fed sitting up for bottle feeding. Infants unable to sit shall always be held for bottle feeding. Bottle propping and carrying of bottles by young children throughout the day and/or night shall not be permitted.