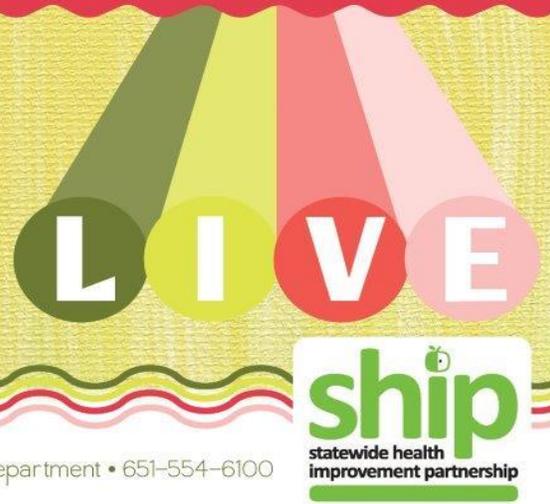


WATERMELON and WIGGLES



Dakota County Public Health Department • 651-554-6100

Smarter Mealtimes

- This initiative should
- *Cost little to nothing
 - *Promote healthy eating behaviors
 - *Be ongoing (not a one-time activity)

Providers' Professional Development Video

- “Smarter Mealtimes: As Simple as A, B, C”
- Learn how to create structure to promote healthy eating choices. Little or no money required!
- Understand three ways to make mealtimes smarter.
- Watch the [VIDEO](#) here.

Key Takeaways

- Children’s food preferences are developed at a young age.
- It may take more than ten exposures before a child accepts a particular food item.
- Teaching children *now* sets them up with healthy preferences they can have for a lifetime.

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| <p>Nutrition environment</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Encourage interaction between adults and children while eating. • Utilize family style meal service. • Create an organized physical surrounding. • Prepare activities outside of meals related to nutrition. | <p>Behavior</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Role model: Eat with the children. • Avoid eating unhealthy foods or beverages in front of children. • Teach children about food outside of mealtime: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Plant a garden ○ Consider non-food treats at celebrations (pencils or stickers) ○ Avoid using food as a reward for good behavior ○ Avoid withholding food as a punishment • Include children in the setup and clean up routine of the meal. | <p>Communication</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Communication should be with children, staff and parents. • Help get children interested in food by talking about food during mealtime. • Ask them to count the number of food items or to describe one of the food items. • Talk about where the food was grown or how it got to their plate. • Announce the menu in daily routines. • Provide parents information about how to help their children try new foods at home. |
| <p>Atmosphere</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Are the serving bowls and utensils appropriate for the child’s age? • Is the lighting bright enough? • Is clutter removed from the dining area? • Consider implementing family style dining. • Think about ways to make the space visually engaging. | | <p>Resources: Download PDFs with nutrition and wellness tips for young children.</p> <p>Want to get started with non-meal time nutrition education? LANA is a curriculum that helps children learn to eat more fruits and vegetables.</p> |