

## Nurturing healthy eating at early childhood services

### What are healthy eating behaviours?

Healthy eating behaviours include both the food we eat **and** how we eat it.

A healthy eater enjoys a variety of foods and:

- is comfortable with food and flexible with their eating
- can learn to like new foods
- listens to their body to know how much to eat
- enjoys mealtimes and engages with others.

Learning to enjoy a variety of food and become a healthy eater takes time and practice. Some people take longer than others. To become a healthy eater, children need lots of positive experiences to help build their comfort and skills with food.

### What am I responsible for?

Feeding children and nurturing healthy eating is a shared job. Caregivers, early childhood services and children each have a defined role in feeding and eating:

**Caregivers** decide what food and drink is sent if lunchboxes are required. For babies, caregivers also decide whether to send breast milk or infant formula.

**Early childhood services** decide when and where children eat. If food is provided by the service, they choose what is offered for meals and/or snacks apart from breast milk and infant formula.

**Babies from birth to around six months** decide when they need to feed (hunger cues) and how much.

**Older babies and small children** decide how much, in what order and whether they eat at meal and snack times.

Read more about roles and responsibilities at mealtimes at:

[https://doh.health.tas.gov.au/mwew/early\\_childhood\\_services/plant\\_fruit\\_and\\_veg\\_in\\_your\\_lunchbox/nurturing\\_healthy\\_eating\\_at\\_mealtimes\\_in\\_the\\_early\\_childhood\\_setting](https://doh.health.tas.gov.au/mwew/early_childhood_services/plant_fruit_and_veg_in_your_lunchbox/nurturing_healthy_eating_at_mealtimes_in_the_early_childhood_setting)

# Move Well Eat Well

## How can early childhood services encourage healthy eating behaviours?

Remember that the role of 'what' food (or whether to offer breastmilk or infant formula) sits with caregivers and/or the menu service and the 'how much' sits with babies and children. Services can focus on making eating enjoyable. Try to make mealtimes:

### Positive by:

- respecting the food and drinks (i.e. breast milk or infant formula) sent from home
- trusting children know how much they need to eat or drink and in which order
- removing any pressure around eating and drinking.

### Relaxed by:

- developing a mealtime routine for babies from around 6 months and young children at the service
- allowing enough time to eat or drink
- having a comfortable place to eat and drink.

### Social by:

- encouraging positive interactions and conversations
- role modelling your enjoyment of food and eating
- teaching appropriate mealtime behaviours.

