

Move Well Eat Well

Mealtime roles and responsibilities



The Division of Responsibility (DoR) is a best practice model for feeding children. Research shows that feeding in this way can support children to meet their developmental milestones and to grow into the body that is right for them¹. Research has associated this way of eating with:

- a diverse diet that includes a range of foods from the five food groups^{2,3}
- a positive and enjoyable relationship with food²
- increased self-trust and trust in others²
- better body image and self-acceptance³
- higher levels of activity²
- better sleep and longer sleep duration⁴
- better medical measures of health, including cholesterol and blood pressure⁵.

Who does what?

The DoR considers feeding a shared responsibility and assigns specific roles to the people involved in feeding children:

- Adults decide **what food is provided**. For example, parents decide what food is packed in the lunchbox. If food is provided at school, the school decides what is offered on these occasions.
- Adults decide **when and where children eat**. For example, parents decide that the evening meal will be eaten at the dining table. The classroom teacher decides that the class will eat outside. The school sets out the timetable for the school day, including meal and snack times.
- Children decide **how much, in what order and whether they will eat**.

The DoR preserves children's ability to eat and respond to hunger and fullness cues, as parents and caregivers (including teachers) respect and build a child's autonomy by removing pressure around food.

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Children will eat the amount they need to grow and stay well

It can be difficult at first to trust children to know how much and what to eat from what is on offer. The amount and type of food they eat can vary widely from meal to meal and day to day. However, when balanced out across a week or a month, children are very good at getting enough energy and nutrients to meet their needs.

Research shows that if adults provide the structure around mealtimes, children will eat the amount they need to grow and stay well ^{2,3}.



Actions your school can take to support best practice feeding for children

Schools can take a DoR approach to feeding by:

- Creating a positive, relaxed, and social mealtime environment.
- Not commenting on the food that children bring from home and how much or how little they are eating.
- Taking a neutral approach when talking about food. Referring to food by its name, rather than through binary terms like good and bad or even healthy or unhealthy.
- Enforcing a zero-tolerance policy around food teasing between children (eg. negative comments about the type of food that others are eating).

Keen to learn more?

See our Nurturing Healthy Eating at Mealtimes page for more information:

www.movewelleatwell.tas.gov.au/primary_schools/plant_fruit_and_veg_in_your_lunchbox/nurturing_healthy_mealtimes_in_primary_schools

To learn more about the DoR, see:

- The Ellyn Satter Institute (www.ellynsatterinstitute.org/how-to-feed/the-division-of-responsibility-in-feeding/)
- Child of Mine: Feeding with Love and Good Sense by Ellyn Satter (book)
- Your Parenting Mojo: Division of Responsibility with Ellyn Satter (podcast) (podcasts.apple.com/au/podcast/142-division-of-responsibility-with-ellyn-satter/id1148570190?i=1000532079680)
- Food Education and Neutrality with Kelly Fullerton (podcast) (teacherfanclub.com/kelly-fullerton)

¹ Satter EM. Feeding dynamics: Helping children to eat well. *J Pediatr Health Car.* 1995;9:178-184

² Lohse B, Satter E, Horacek T, Gebreselassie T, Oakland MJ. Measuring Eating Competence: psychometric properties and validity of the ecSatter Inventory. *J Nutr Educ Behav.* 2007;39 (suppl):S154-S166

³ Satter EM. Eating competence: Definition and evidence for the Satter eating competence model. *J Nutr Educ Behav (suppl).* 2007;39:S142- S153

⁴ Satter E. *Secrets of Feeding a Healthy Family.* 2nd Edition. United States: Kelcy Press; 2008

⁵ Psota T, Lohse B, West S. Associations between eating competence and cardiovascular disease biomarkers. *J Nutr Educ Behav.* 2007;39 (suppl):S171-S178