

## Healthy Eating Tips For Infants And Toddlers

(NAPS)—Feeding is one of a parent's most important jobs. It helps children grow healthy and strong. But meal and snack times also give parents a chance to help their children feel important and loved; understood and respected; and learn to trust that others will care for them.

Here are some tips about how to nurture a child's overall healthy development through feeding from the experts at ZERO TO THREE, a nonprofit child development organization:

- **Remember: Meals are about more than food.** They are a time to connect with your child. Talk with her and don't let her eat alone.

- **Create routines around mealtime.** Routines help children feel loved and secure. You might say a blessing or share something about your day before each meal.

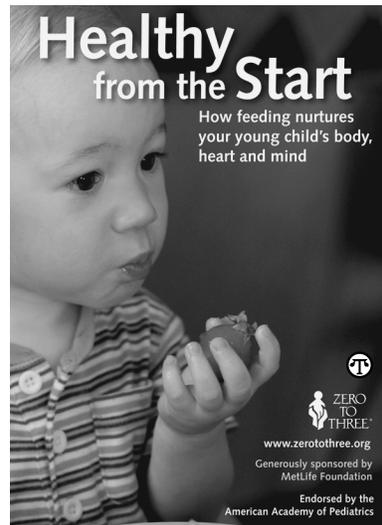
- **Establish regular meal and snack times beginning when your child is 9 to 12 months old.** This helps children learn to link their feelings of hunger with eating at regular times across the day.

- **Offer three to four healthy food choices at each meal—among those your child likes.** Research shows that children will choose a healthy diet when they are offered a selection of healthy foods.

- **Don't force your baby or toddler to eat.** This often results in children refusing the food and eating less.

- **Offer your child a healthy snack between meals if you think he is hungry—**so if he doesn't eat much at a meal, he doesn't have to wait long to eat again.

- **Limit juice to no more than four to six ounces a day.** Juice has lots of sugar. Add water to the juice or offer fresh fruit instead.



**Mealtimes are rich opportunities to connect with your child and support his or her overall healthy development.**

- **Be flexible about letting little ones get up from the table when they are done.** Babies and toddlers can't sit for long. Plan for three meals a day of about 10 to 20 minutes and two to three snacks of about five to 15 minutes.

- **Don't give up on new foods.** You may have to offer your child a new food 10 to 15 times before he will eat it. Encourage your child to touch the new food, lick and taste it. Let him see you eat it.

- **Turn off the TV (computers, etc.) at mealtimes.** The television can distract children from eating and takes time away from talking as a family.

- **If you are concerned about your child's weight or activity level, talk to your child's health care provider.**

To order copies of the full booklet "Healthy From The Start" and for more information on feeding and other parenting topics, visit [www.zerotothree.org](http://www.zerotothree.org).