



Technical Assistance Manual

The Healthy Kids, Healthy Future Child Care Goals



Physical Activity: Provide 1-2 hours of physical activity throughout the day, including inside and outside play when possible.



Screen Time: No screen time for children under 2 years. Limit of 30 minutes of quality screen time for children 2 and older.



Food: Serve fruits or vegetables at every meal, eat meals family-style whenever possible and don't serve fried foods.



Beverages: Provide access to water throughout the day and don't serve sugar-sweetened drinks. For children age 2 and older, serve low-fat (1%) or non-fat milk and no more than one 4- to 6-ounce serving of 100% juice per day.



Infant Feeding: For mothers who want to continue breastfeeding, provide their milk to their infants and welcome them to breastfeed during the child care day. Support all new parents' decisions about infant feeding.

Physical Activity and Screen Time

Young children need to be physically active. It is recommended that toddlers get at least 90 minutes and preschoolers get at least 2 hours of physical activity each day.¹ Since many children are in child care throughout the week, it's important for child care providers to give youngsters of all ages daily opportunities to be physically active in a safe play space, surrounded by positive and responsive adult caregivers. Infants need short durations of supervised "tummy time" a few times each day. There is no set time duration for tummy time.



It is also important to limit sedentary activities like screen time (including television, DVDs, computer, and video games). It is recommended that infants and toddlers (0-2 years old) get no screen time at all.² Children 2 years and older should be limited to 1-2 hours of screen time per day, of which child care should provide no more than 30 minutes per week.^{2,3}

Encouraging children to be physically active and limiting their screen time will help them stay healthy and promote development of their motor, social, and cognitive skills.



Best Practice: Preschoolers are provided with 120 minutes or more of active play time (indoor and outdoor) each day.



Best Practice: Toddlers are provided with 60-90 minutes of active play time (indoor and outdoor) each day.

Why it's important

Children of all ages can benefit from regular physical activity – it improves children's physical and mental health, learning of social skills, and cognitive development.

- Physical activity helps children stay at a healthy weight and reduces their risk of developing obesity-related illnesses, such as type 2 diabetes, high blood pressure, and high cholesterol.⁴⁻⁶
- Physical activity has been shown to help relieve feelings of stress and depression and reduce behavioral problems.⁷
- Active play provides children with the opportunity to learn to communicate with others and develop social skills.⁸
- Physical activity has been shown to promote cognitive development.⁹ Children have been shown to learn better after bursts of physical activity due to improved attention and focus.
- In special needs children, physical activity can help control or slow the progression of their condition or disability, or minimize its side effects.¹⁰

Outdoor play is an important part of children's physical activity. Children should be encouraged to go outdoors daily because they tend to be more active when they are outdoors.^{11,12} It also allows children to learn about nature. Exposure to sunlight also promotes the production of Vitamin D, which is essential for bone growth.

It is important to encourage young children to be active because the behaviors learned in early childhood often become lifelong habits. Promoting enjoyment, confidence and competence in being physically active early in life will help to encourage continued participation in physical activity.¹

Common challenges and how to overcome them

THE CHALLENGE = Unsure About How to Promote Physical Activity

Children are still developing their gross motor skills, making it difficult to know what kind of activities are most appropriate and will help encourage children to be more active.

SOLUTION 1 = Become familiar with children's developmental milestones

- Knowing toddlers and preschoolers' developmental milestones will help you offer physical activities that promote gross motor skill development. Check out this helpful chart of [Major Milestones](#).

- Be aware that not all children reach developmental milestones at the same time. Encourage toddlers and preschoolers to engage in activities that challenge them to develop their gross motor skills.

SOLUTION 2 = Incorporate physical activity into existing daily routines

- Add active games or activities into circle time. Check out pages 11-23 of the Sesame Street’s [Get Moving!](#) handbook for lots of creative ideas.
- Use physical activity as a teaching strategy during lesson plans. Sesame Street’s [Healthy Habits for Life](#) manual has some great suggestions; check out the “Mango Tango” song on page 76.
- Introduce simple games such as Simon Says or Follow the Leader, or movement songs like the Hokey Pokey, Head Shoulders Knees and Toes or If You’re Happy and You Know It. More ideas for [games with toddlers](#) can be found at KidsHealth. And for ideas for preschoolers, this list of [non-competitive games](#) from the National Association of Child Care Resource & Referral Agencies.
- Remember, even 5-10 minute bursts of activity can make a difference!

SOLUTION 3 = Make transitions more active

- Instead of just walking quietly, encourage children to hop or stomp from one location to the next. Check out the video [Motion Moments: Preschool](#) from the National Resource Center for Health and Safety in Child Care and Early Education for more ideas, particularly minutes 1:15-3:32.
 - Added suggestion: Don’t just stand on the sidelines, be the leader. Join in and lead children in activities that make them get up and move. Be sure to wear clothing and shoes that are comfortable and allow you to move around.

THE CHALLENGE = Lack of Space

It is difficult to promote physical activity when you don’t have the indoor or outdoor play space that allows for gross motor activities.

SOLUTION 1 = Get creative in your search for space

- Make use of long hallways.
- Move tables, chairs, and toys aside to create an open space for play.
- Use crowded spaces to your advantage and set up an obstacle course. Encourage children to crawl under tables, step over chairs, and push toys back and forth across the room.
- Take advantage of your portable play equipment. Balls, yoga mats, and push-pull toys are great for promoting physical activity. But they are also small and can be moved around easily. You can also swap pieces in and out to keep things fresh. These toys can help you make the most of a small space.
- Need more ideas about how to make good use of small spaces? Check out the [Small Spaces, Great Ideas](#) (starting on page 7) from Sesame Street’s We Have the Moves! Handbook.

- Take advantage of the outdoors! If your indoor play space is small, take children outside. Most indoor games can be played outside!

THE CHALLENGE = Children Don't Need Any Help Being Active

You may think that children are already very active and they don't really need adult encouragement.

SOLUTION 1 = Monitor children's free play time to make sure they are engaged in active play

- After about 10 minutes outside, children's activity level may decrease. Monitor for this so that you can provide prompts and encouragement. Try to engage them in active play by tossing a ball with them, starting a new game, or pointing out interesting play opportunities.

SOLUTION 2 = Help children avoid boredom on the playground by having a selection of outdoor portable play equipment

- When it comes to children's activity, offering a selection of portable play equipment helps keep them interested in active play. In fact, studies have shown that it is more important than large fixed equipment.
- There are many great options for outdoor portable play equipment - tricycles, balls, tunnels, bean bags, and hula hoops (many of which are inexpensive). Be sure that children have a selection to choose from to help keep them interested and engaged in active play.
- Allow children to get creative with outdoor play equipment, as long as they are using the equipment safely. Want to learn more about child safety during outdoor play, then check out this article about [Playground Safety](#) from KidsHealth.

SOLUTION 3 = Incorporate structured play to bump up activity

- Adult-led physical activities have been shown to produce higher levels of physical activity in children than unstructured play. It can be as simple as putting on some music and leading children in a dance activity. Use this [Dance Spinner](#) to help encourage kids to get their whole body moving.
- Sesame Street's [We Have the Moves!](#) Handbook offers some great suggestions for indoor games on pages 7-12 and ideas for how to make good use of the open space outdoors on pages 13-16.
- Check out Head Start Body Start's [Get Moving Today Activity Calendar](#) for daily suggestions for weather appropriate physical activities, available in English and Spanish.

SOLUTION 4 = Be aware of your own practices and how they may restrict children's activity

- Avoid long periods of seated time. Allow children to get up and move every 15 minutes during inside time.
- Incorporate activity breaks (1-5 minute exercises that you lead) into lessons or circle time activities.

THE CHALLENGE = Bad Weather

Rain and extreme hot or cold temperatures can limit time spent outside or cancel outdoor time all together.

SOLUTION 1 = Plan ahead and find creative options for rainy, cold, or snowy days

- Create a stack of physical activity index cards, each of which describes an easy indoor physical activity. During rainy/snowy days or days when it is too cold to be outside, great ideas will be at your fingertips. Sesame Street's [Healthy Habits for Life](#) manual provides more suggestions about how to utilize these cards on page 23-24.
- If the grass and playground equipment are wet, take a nature walk outside. Use it as an opportunity for a fun outdoor adventure to teach them about what causes rain. If there is a light sprinkle, just make sure children are prepared for the walk by wearing boots and carrying an umbrella. Nature walks also work well on hot summer days when it may be too hot for children to engage in more vigorous physical activities.

SOLUTION 2 = Find creative options for hot days

- On hot summer days, promote water play. Set up a water table or sprinkler. Ask parents to provide a change of clothes for their child. Don't forget to adhere to your policy about use of sunscreen before going outside and encouraging children to drink water.
- Check out the [Heat Illness](#) and [Dehydration](#) First-Aid Sheets so that you know how to help children avoid these problems and you know the signs and symptoms and what to do if they arise.

SOLUTION 3 = Be flexible with your schedule

- Consider modifying the summer schedule to provide outdoor play in morning when temperatures tend to be lower. In the winter, switch things up and offer outdoor play in the afternoon when it may be warmer. Similarly, if it rains in the morning, try to work in extra time for outdoor play in the afternoon.

SOLUTION 4 = Encourage appropriate clothing and shoes

- Talk with parents and let them know that you will be taking the children outside every day so they can dress their child in appropriate clothing and shoes. Discourage flip flops and crocs as children may be more likely to fall and get hurt wearing these types of shoes.
- Keep spare clothes, boots, hats, and gloves on hand for children who are not prepared to go outside when conditions are not perfect. Ask parents to donate their child's outgrown coats and boots to help you build up a supply.

THE CHALLENGE = Accommodating Children with Special Needs

You may feel uncertain about how to encourage physical activity in children with special needs.

SOLUTION 1 = Get motivated by finding out more about the great benefits physical activity can offer children with special needs

- Educate yourself on the benefits, as well as the risks, of physical activity for children with specific health care needs. Check out this great [webinar](#) about including all young children in physical activity from Dr. Diane Craft.

SOLUTION 2 = Explore ideas for engaging children with different types of disabilities

- Consider the types of special needs children you are serving and then educate yourself on how to offer appropriate physical activities. Check out this article about [Adapting the Child Care Environment for Children with Special Needs](#) from the NC Cooperative Extension.



Best Practice: All infants should be provided with short supervised periods of tummy time.

Why it's important

Tummy time has many benefits, such as promoting motor skill and cognitive development.

- Tummy time helps infants build strength, particularly in their neck and shoulder muscles. This, in turn, helps infants reach early movement milestones like rolling over, sitting up, and crawling.^{13,14}
- Tummy time helps infants explore their environment – to see, touch, and feel what's around them. It is through active play with objects and people that infants acquire basic cognitive understandings, such as cause-and effect and symbolic representation, which are necessary for later academic learning.
- Active motor play helps infants develop communication and language skills. Infants and toddlers with more advanced motor skills have greater language fluency in later childhood and adolescence.¹⁵

Furthermore, confining infants and toddlers to strollers, play pens, car and infant seats for hours at a time may delay their motor skill and cognitive development.¹⁶

In addition to these many benefits, tummy time also decreases the risk of Sudden Infant Death Syndrome (SIDS) and minimizes the risk of developing a flat head (positional plagiocephaly).^{17,18}

Common challenges and how to overcome them

THE CHALLENGE = Lack of Time

Without a clear plan, it can seem impossible to find opportunities for tummy time during your busy day.

SOLUTION 1 = Make the daily schedule work for you

- Incorporate two or three sessions of scheduled tummy time into your daily schedule. Sessions should last between 10 and 15 minutes.
- Allow yourself enough flexibility so that you can initiate tummy time when infants are alert and happy. Try to identify times during the day when babies are happy and fed, and not tired or cranky.

SOLUTION 2 = Pair tummy time with another daily activity

- Infants love consistency. By pairing tummy time with another daily activity, infants will know when to expect tummy time and will be less fussy. For example, every time you change an infant's diaper, you can follow with 10-15 minutes of tummy time.
- If you are also caring for toddlers and older children, pair tummy time with older children's free play. Make sure that toys belonging to older children do not interfere with the infant's space.

THE CHALLENGE = Fussy Infants

Infants may be uncomfortable or become frustrated during tummy time.

SOLUTION 1 = Start with short bouts of tummy time and increase the length of bouts gradually

- Be aware that infants who are new to tummy time may find it uncomfortable. But, the more exposure to tummy time the infant gets the better!
- Start with just a short bout of 15 to 30 seconds during the first few tries. Then, increase the length of the bouts gradually as the infant becomes more comfortable with moving on his or her stomach.
- If the infant is becoming fussy or frustrated, pick him or her up and try it again later. It is important the infant doesn't become discouraged and associate tummy time with negative experiences.

SOLUTION 2 = Change up tummy time routine

- If an infant is consistently fussy during tummy time, look for any links between tummy time fussiness and preceding activities. For example, some infants do not do well with tummy time after meals because they tend to spit up, others don't do well before naptime because they are sleepy.

SOLUTION 3 = Participate in tummy time with infants

- Get down on the floor and talk, sing, and play with the infant. Tummy time is a great opportunity for bonding!
- If an infant starts to fuss, you will be right there to help divert his or her attention. Move a sparkly toy or a toy that makes noise in front of the infant.
- If you sense an infant is becoming frustrated or about to be fussy, take a minute to cheer him or her up. Try putting the infant onto his or her back and blowing "raspberries" on their tummy. This may allow the infant to continue with tummy time.

THE CHALLENGE = Unsure how to make tummy time productive

You know that infants need tummy time, but you are unsure about what things you should be doing to make sure that they are getting the most out of it.

SOLUTION 1 = Use tummy time to promote gross motor development

- Familiarize yourself with the developmental milestones during the first year of life so that you can tailor tummy time activities towards developing these specific skills. Check out these important [developmental milestones](#).
- Provide a space for tummy time that allows you to engage and play games with the infant that challenges them to twist, turn, grasp, and sit upright. Check out this [Motion Moments video](#) for a how to guide.
- If the infant can't support him or herself on their forearms, place a pillow or a rolled up towel under her chest and armpits. This position will allow the infant to look around at the environment, grasp for toys, and interact with you.

SOLUTION 2 = Use the outdoor environment and take infants outside

- Tummy time is appropriate for both the indoor and outdoor environment. When outside, lay a blanket on the ground for tummy time and change up the scenery by laying the infants near the garden or another visually stimulating area outside
- Keep the sun in mind. Place infants in the shade or under an umbrella to prevent sunburn.
- Consider the season when deciding the best times to go outside. Mornings may work better during warmer months, while afternoons may be better during cooler months.



Best Practice: Limit preschoolers total screen to no more than 30 minutes per week.*



Best Practice: Screen time is never allowed for infants and toddlers.

*Work with parents to ensure that children have no more than 1-2 hours per day when at home.

Why it's important

The American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP) discourages the use of screen time for children under two years and recommends a limit of 1-2 hours a day for children two years and older.² Screen time is not just watching television; it also includes time spent playing on or with a computer, cell phone, tablet, or video game. Knowing that children accumulate quite a bit of screen time at home, it is recommended that screen time in child care is limited to 30 minutes per week for children over two.³

Screen time is a sedentary activity that often does very little to stimulate the brain. Several studies have linked excessive screen time to childhood obesity and lowered cognitive development.¹⁹ Instead, children should be engaging in physical activity or educational activities.

Children under 2 years old are in a critical period for brain development and activities that are active, social, and engage a child's senses – such as touching, exploring, and playing – are more beneficial than watching television.²⁰ Children exposed to too much screen time may also experience language delays and sleep problems.^{20,21}

For preschoolers, screen time can increase their risk of being overweight or obese and can have a negative impact on their psychological health, specifically greater hyperactivity and antisocial behaviors. Screen time may also lead to greater aggressive and violent behavior because these young children cannot tell the difference between fantasy and reality on television and may become desensitized to violence.²² While watching television may be an enjoyable activity, they lack the ability to gain educational value out of it.²³

Common challenges and how to overcome them

THE CHALLENGE = Screen Time Is Needed as a Distraction

Screen time helps keep children distracted while performing necessary tasks, like setting up for lunch or cleaning.

SOLUTION 1 = When cooking and cleaning, engage children by having them imitate your actions

- Allow children to play with pots and pans while preparing meals.

- When cleaning, provide children with towels to help “clean up” the area.
- Offer play props to children, such as pretend food and utensils. This will stimulate a child’s imagination and help develop their motor skills.
- If children are able to help out, assign tasks like wiping off or setting up the table.

SOLUTION 2 = Provide opportunities for self-directed play

- Craft time is an excellent opportunity to keep children engaged in an activity that helps develop creativity and artistic skills. Provide crayons, markers, stickers, blank paper, construction paper, and water color paint. Offer coloring templates, especially ones that promote healthy lifestyles. Check out Sesame Street’s [Every Day Is a Healthy Day](#) booklet – many pages (3, 12, 16, etc.) can serve as coloring pages and then be linked to fun activities or materials to send home to parents.
- Create activity boxes that provide necessary supplies to keep children distracted with simple activities. The box could contain things like puzzles and games, coloring pages, and/or worksheets.
- Keep children entertained with story time. Have children to select a picture book and encourage them to read on their own. You can offer group story time using audiobooks. Have children gather together to listen to the recorded narrator while one child holds the book and turns the pages.

SOLUTION 3 = Use nap time to complete tasks

- Take advantage of the time that children are napping to complete cleaning and paperwork or attend to personal needs and responsibilities.

THE CHALLENGE = Child Preference for Screen-Based Activities

Preschoolers may plead for permission to watch television and do other screen-based activities.

SOLUTION 1 = Cover or hide screens so that they are out of sight

- Cover televisions stored in the classroom with a cloth. Better yet, see if the television can be stored outside of the classroom in a closet or office. Hiding screens helps reduce the visual reminder to children so that they can stay focused on more active and educational tasks.

SOLUTION 2 = Enthusiastically suggest alternative activities that promote physical activity

- Have children engage in a “Movement Parade” where they march around the classroom and perform various types of movement, such as hopping, leaping, and twirling. Give them streamers to wave around as they are marching in the parade.
- Create an obstacle course in the classroom. Position hula hoops on the floor for kids to jump through and balls on the ground that kids need to roll from point A to point B.
- Take a virtual trip to the zoo or an aquarium. Have kids mimic the sounds and motions of different animals. They can wave their “elephant trunks” and thump their chests like a gorilla.

- Start a dance party or conga line. Play fun, upbeat music and have children mimic different dance moves that you demonstrate. Have children spin around, wiggle, or slide from left to right. Use this [Dance Spinner](#) to help encourage kids to get their whole body moving.

SOLUTION 3 = Identify age-appropriate, educational programming if screen time is allowed

- Make sure that all screen time is educational. Select only programs or videos that are age-appropriate and free from commercials. Sesame Street has created [The Get Healthy Now Show](#), which uses Sesame Street characters to teach children about healthy habits in under 30 minutes.
- Engage children while watching the program – ask them about the characters, situations, and outcomes on the program. If there is music in the program, encourage children to dance during these segments.
- Remember: Total screen time for children over 2 should be limited to 30 minutes per week. Children under two should have NO screen time.

THE CHALLENGE = Parents Not Aware of the Importance

Parents may not be aware of the effects of screen time on child development and may be pushing your program to offer more screen-based activities.

SOLUTION 1 = Educate parents with newsletters and workshops

- Provide parents with current screen time recommendations for toddlers and preschool children. Note that screen time includes computers and hand-held electronic equipment, not just television. Check out this [Parent Letter](#) from the National Association of Child Care Resource & Referral Agencies.
- Suggest TV programs that are educational for children and run no more than half an hour in length. An example is [The Get Healthy Now Show](#).

SOLUTION 2 = Post information about screen time on the class bulletin board or Facebook page

- Use this opportunity to explain the influence that advertising can have on children.
- Another posting could provide an overview of what television ratings mean and the influence that violence in TV programs can have on children. KidsHealth has a useful article about [How TV Affects Children](#).
- Use postings to encourage parents to reduce screen time at home and offer strategies for how to limit screen time. Need ideas? Check out this article on [Healthy Habits for TV, Video Games, and the Internet](#) from KidsHealth.



Best Practice: Parents should be offered screen time reduction or media literacy education* 2 times per year or more.

*Literacy education can include special programs, newsletters, or information sheets.

Why it's important

Infants, toddlers and preschoolers are far exceeding recommended limits on screen time. The American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP) discourages use of media for children under two, but infants and toddlers spend on average about 40 minutes a day watching television or videos.^{2,24} Although a limit of 1-2 hours is recommended for preschoolers, they spend on average 4.5 hours a day in front of a screen.^{2,25}

Many parents are not familiar with current screen time recommendations for children.²⁶ They often view it as an educational resource and are not concerned with the amount of television their child is watching.²⁷ Many think only about time spent watching television; but screen time also includes time spent playing on or with a computer, cell phone, tablet, or video game. Also, many parents do not understand the rating system for television programs and video games.²⁶ It is important to not only educate parents about screen time but to also partner with parents to ensure children are not being exposed to too much screen time throughout the day.

Common challenges and how to overcome them

THE CHALLENGE = Parents Misunderstanding of Screen Time

Parents do not understand the definition of screen time or how much their child is getting.

SOLUTION 1 = Offer newsletters and other educational materials to parents to help educate them about screen time

- Let parents know that screen time includes more than just watching TV. Time spent in front of a computer, cell phone, tablet (iPad, Microsoft Surface, etc.), or gaming device (Xbox, Nintendo DS, PlayStation, etc.) also counts.
- Help your parents become wise consumers of media that are marketed as “educational”. Remind parents to consider the true educational value of programs and apps before purchasing or downloading. Even if a program or app is educational, the time a child spends using it is still considered screen time.
- Help parents become aware of how much time their child is spending in front of screens using [Interactive Worksheets](#) like these from WeCan! Be sure to let them know how much screen time their child is getting while at child care.
- Educate parents about screen time recommendations using a [Screen Time Newsletter](#) like this one from National Association of Child Care Resource & Referral Agencies.

THE CHALLENGE = Parents Not Aware of the Impact

Parents do not understand the impact that screen time has on their child.

SOLUTION 1 = Use your child care program’s website or social media to periodically post information or links about screen time and its effect on children

- Remind parents that screen time has been linked to childhood obesity, lowered literacy rates, and heightened aggression. Screen time can also interfere with being physically active, doing homework, playing with friends, and spending time with family. A helpful article about [How TV Affects Your Child](#) can be found at KidsHealth.
- Remind parents that television advertisements may impact children’s beliefs and preferences. Children under age 6 have trouble distinguishing television programs from commercials and do not understand that commercials are selling a product. Encourage parents to talk with their kids about commercials and to limit exposure by recording programs or viewing only public television stations.
- Remind parents that turning off the television can help reduce household noise and might actually calm some children. Turning off the television an hour before bedtime will help their child fall sleep more easily.
- Remind parents to check television and video game ratings before allowing children to watch these programs or play these games. Violence in television programs, movies, and video games may increase children’s aggressive behavior. Check out page 4 of this online article from KidsHealth for a simple overview of [TV Ratings](#) and this webpage from the Entertainment Software Rating Board about [Computer Game Ratings](#).
- Remind parents to be vigilant about internet safety. Simple strategies like reviewing the internet history to make sure that their child is visiting appropriate sites, having their child use the computer in a common area where the parent can see, and using website filters that will only allow children to visit “kid friendly” sites. More information on [Internet Safety](#) can be found at KidsHealth.
- Use your social media to help keep parents informed about the most recent research studies about the effects of media on children. Post links to these studies where they can read a brief overview of the study and its findings.

THE CHALLENGE = Parents Need Help Reducing Screen Time

Parents might need help in finding ideas and strategies that will allow them to reduce screen time.

SOLUTION 1 = Hold an annual parent training at your child care center

- Once a year, hold a half or full day parent training to catch parents up on current nutrition, physical activity, and screen time recommendations. Be sure to devote time to review screen time recommendations and allow parents to brainstorm solutions for overcoming challenges to meeting these recommendations.

SOLUTION 2 = Recommend activities that promote interaction between parents and their child

- Going for a hiking or a walk in the park provides parents the chance to help their child explore the outdoors. Provide parents with sample questions: What do you see? What does that flower or tree look like? What animals or insects do you see?
- Playing board games with children allows the parent to help encourage development of problem solving and social skills.
- Reading with children helps them develop communication and language skills. Reading also builds creativity.

SOLUTION 3 = Provide activity ideas that do not require direct participation of a parent

- Having a designated “play area” somewhere in the house that is free of screens will allow children to play independently. Set up the play area with dolls, rattles, play food, balls, etc. Puzzles and picture books are another great option that helps build problem solving skills and creativity. Arts and crafts supplies like crayons, markers, stickers, construction paper, popsicle sticks and pipe cleaners are another great way to keep children busy.

SOLUTION 4 = Provide suggestions for how they might adjust their home environment to help limit screen time

- Limit where televisions are located. Children who have a television in their bedroom tend to watch more television and have more sleep problems.
- Turn off the television during meal times. Family meal time around a table fosters the development of social skills in children and strengthens relationships among family members.
- Encourage parents to be role models by limiting their own screen time use while children are around.
- Offer parents resources such as this article on [Healthy Habits for TV, Video Games, and the Internet](#) from KidsHealth that provides easy strategies for limiting screen time.

SOLUTION 5 = Encourage parents to limit screen time to quality, educational programming

- Parents may need to screen TV programs before showing them to children to make sure that the program is free from bias and violence.
- Parents need to know how to interpret television program ratings. Encourage your parents to check out this online article about [TV Ratings](#) from KidsHealth.
- Engage children while watching the program—ask them about the characters, situations, and outcomes on the program. Discuss any moral or ethical issues that arose in the program and how they were solved.

Healthy Foods and Beverages



Children in full-day care may eat 50% or more of their meals and snacks while at child care.²⁸ Providers can have a strong influence on the foods children eat. Therefore, it is important for providers to be a positive force - encouraging healthy foods like fruits and vegetables, while also limiting their intake of unhealthy ones like fried foods.

What children drink can have a major effect on how many calories they consume and how much calcium they get to build strong bones.²⁹ Child care providers can help shape healthy behaviors by encouraging children to drink healthy beverages like low-fat or non-fat milk and water, while limiting their intake of 100% fruit juice and unhealthy sugar-sweetened beverages.



Child care providers have a powerful opportunity to teach kids' taste buds to appreciate wholesome foods — before they can learn differently. And with a little patience, even the fussiest young diners can learn to like healthy foods.



Best Practice: Serve fruits and/or vegetables at every meal.

Why it's important

Fruits and vegetables are an important part of a child's diet, but most children are not eating the recommended amount each day.³⁰ Fruits and vegetables provide many nutrients, including fiber, vitamin A, vitamin C, folate, and potassium. Dark colored vegetables are particularly important because they contain more vitamins and minerals.

Those who eat more fruits and vegetables have lower risk of chronic diseases such as obesity, heart disease, certain cancers, and stroke. Also, diets low in vegetables tend to be higher in calories.

Introducing fruits and vegetables to children when they are young will help them develop taste preferences for these healthy foods. Remember to be patient; children may need to be exposed to new foods up to 8-10 times before they consider the new food to be normal.

Common challenges and how to overcome them

THE CHALLENGE = Child Preferences

Children can be picky eaters – they often refuse to try fruits, vegetables and other new foods. You don't want food to go to waste, so you serve foods you know children will like and eat with minimal fuss.

SOLUTION 1 = Help children become familiar with new foods

- Introduce new foods one at a time to avoid overwhelming children.
- Serve new foods alongside foods that children already know and like.
- Serve new foods repeatedly so that children have many chances to become familiar and try them.
- Plant a vegetable garden. Children are more likely to eat foods that they grow themselves. Need inspiration? Check out the [Grow It, Try It, Like It Nutrition Education Kit](#) for inspiration and activities to introduce children to new foods.
- If you need specific strategies for dealing with picky eaters, check out page 5 of Nemours' [Best Practices for Healthy Eating](#).

SOLUTION 2 = Make new foods more fun and appealing

- Serve food in fun ways. For example, you can use raisins to make a smiley face in oatmeal.
- Make it a game by challenging children to try fruits and vegetables of different colors.
- Make it fun by hosting tasting parties for new foods. Schedule them at the end of the day so that parents can take part as well.
- Increase appeal by serving fruits and vegetables with a healthy dip.

- Make fruit and vegetable smoothies. Add dark green veggies like spinach and kale to make it a fun green color.
- Allow children to make choices about what they eat. Often, children are more likely to try new foods when they don't feel forced to do so.
- Learn more about why children do not like to try new foods and strategies for providing positive encouragement in this video with the feeding expert [Susan Johnson](#).

SOLUTION 3 = Be a healthy role model

- Talk enthusiastically while you eat fruits and vegetables to show children that you enjoy and are excited about eating healthy. Wisconsin's [Healthy Bites](#) guide provides great tips on how to be a positive role model of good nutrition and is available in English and Spanish.
- When children and adults eat as a group, the picky eaters can see adults and peers enjoying fruits and vegetables. Peer pressure can be helpful in getting these children to try new foods.
- Show children how their friends at Sesame Street like to eat fruits and vegetables. Share one of these [Healthy Habits for Life](#) videos.

SOLUTION 4 = Connect the kitchen and the classroom

- Teach children about where fruits and vegetables come from. Check out booklet 1 in the [Grow It, Try It, Like It Educational Toolkit](#) for a great ideas for how you can use this garden themed program.
- Consider planting container gardens where children can see food being grown and can be used for taste testing.
- Teach children about taste, smell, texture of foods. Check out these pages from Nemours ...
 - [Find the Fruits Coloring Sheet](#)
 - [Fruit Crown Coloring Sheet](#)
 - [What Comes Next Worksheet](#)

THE CHALLENGE = Cost

You need to provide meals and snacks on a budget and fresh fruits and vegetables are just too costly.

SOLUTION 1 = Stay on the lookout for good deals

- Buy fruits and vegetables that are in season, when they are likely to cost less.
- Frozen or canned fruits and vegetables are a good alternative to fresh. These choices are nutritious but less costly. Look for fruits packed in water or 100% juice and vegetables with no added salt or sugar. Canned vegetables can also be rinsed before cooking to remove some of the salt.
- Check out pages 31 of Delaware's [Improving Nutrition & Physical Activity Quality Handbook](#) for a helpful cost-comparison of switching out to healthier food alternatives.

SOLUTION 2 = Buy in bulk

- Check out wholesale grocery clubs in your area. With a small membership fee, you can gain access to special promotions that allow you to buy larger quantities and save money on food.

SOLUTION 3 = Create a community garden to grow your own fruits and vegetables

- Gather ideas about where to plant a garden and what to grow. Check out the step-by-step guide provided by Wisconsin's [Got Dirt Initiative](#).

SOLUTION 4 = Create partnerships with community farmers and organizations

- Be innovative in your shopping, like coordinating farm-to-child-care food distribution and working out partnerships with other providers to get access to affordable fresh fruits and vegetables. Don't think it's possible? Check out this success story from [Portland Oregon](#).

THE CHALLENGE = Storage and Preparation Demands

Fresh fruits and vegetables need a place to be stored until they are used. And, whole fruits and vegetables must be peeled, chopped, and cooked, which requires time you don't have.

SOLUTION 1 = Maximize your storage capacity

- Pre-cut fruits and vegetables, then store in containers to make better use of your refrigerator space.
- Once cut, foods can also be stored in the freezer. Learn more about how long foods can be stored frozen using these [Guidelines](#) from the USDA.

SOLUTION 2 = Maximize your efficiency in food preparation

- Assemble ingredients and equipment at the cooking work-station before meal preparation begins.
- Arrange ingredients in order that they will be used.

SOLUTION 3 = Create cycling menu plans

- Create a menu plan, then work that plan. Once you know what is being served that week, use it to find ways to be more efficient with your time. Plan one trip to the grocery store instead of a daily run for last minute items. Consider how tomorrow's meals might get a head start the day before.
- Consider menu "cycling". Create a series of healthy menus that lay out meals and snacks for a period of 4-6 weeks. Once you run through these menus, start back at the beginning and repeat. This allows staff to become familiar with recipes and more efficient in the kitchen. Check out this helpful [toolkit](#) about menu cycling from Idaho's Department of Education and Team Nutrition USA.

THE CHALLENGE = Unhealthy Recipes

Fruits and vegetables may be cooked with margarine, butter, added sugar, or salt – extra calories and sodium that children don't need.

SOLUTION 1 = Search for healthier recipes

- Take advantage of existing recipes created specifically for child care programs that will help you offer fruits and vegetables prepared in a healthy way – like the USDA’s [Cookbook for Child Care Centers](#) or their [Cookbook for Homes](#).
- Be creative in your seasoning of vegetables. Many adults have become used to enjoying their food seasoned with margarine, butter, and added sugar or salt, and are in the habit of preparing food that way. However, herbs and spices offer great alternatives for adding flavor that both adults and children will enjoy. Check out these resources to learn more about seasoning food: [Flavor that Food; Add a Little Spice \(& Herbs\) to Your Life!](#); [Fresh Herbs: a Picture of Healthy Eating](#).

SOLUTION 2 = Offer raw fruits and vegetables

- Fruits are naturally sweet and full of juice, which makes the added salt, fat and sugar unnecessary.
- Cut fruit into small pieces and enjoy fresh or with various healthy dips.
- Let children make their own salad with this [Jr Salad Bar](#) activity.



Best Practice: Limit fried or pre-fried potatoes to no more than once a month



Best Practice: Limit fried or pre-fried forms of frozen and breaded meats or fish to no more than once a month

Why it's important

Fried and pre-fried potatoes and meats (such as French fries, tater tots, hash browns, chicken nuggets, and fish sticks) contribute a lot of saturated fat and calories to the diet. Over consumption of these foods by children has led to intakes that exceed the dietary guidelines recommendations for saturated fat and calories.

Reduction of these food items can significantly reduce calories consumed. Fried and pre-fried foods are often also high in salt, so cutting back will also help children reduce their total salt intake.

An added benefit of switching out fried and pre-fried foods is that it provides an opportunity to offer children healthier alternatives, including nutrient-rich vegetables, lean proteins, and healthier fats.

Common challenges and how to overcome them

THE CHALLENGE = Child Preferences

Children tend to be familiar with fried foods and like eating them. You don't want food to go to waste, so you serve foods you know children will like and eat with minimal fuss.

SOLUTION 1 = Help children become familiar with new foods

- Serve new foods alongside foods that children already know and like.
- Serve new foods repeatedly so that children have many chances to become familiar and try them. Remember, children may need 10 or more exposures.
- Look for healthier versions of these familiar fried foods. Try these swap outs:

Instead of...

Try...

French fries

roasted potato wedges
baked sweet potato chips

potato chips

baked vegetable chips
whole grain crackers

fried chicken nuggets

baked chicken nuggets
chicken spring rolls (made with rice paper)

fried fish sticks

grilled chicken sandwich

baked fish tacos

More [Healthy Recipe Ideas](#) can be found at KidsHealth.

SOLUTION 2 = Make new foods more fun and appealing

- Increase appeal by serving non-fried alternatives with a healthy dip.
- Make it fun by offering tasting parties for new foods.
- Need more tips for making new foods fun for kids, check page 22 of the USDA's Provider Handbook for the Child and Adult Care Food Program on [Encouraging Kids to Eat Lean Healthy Protein](#).

THE CHALLENGE = Cost

Pre-fried potatoes and meats are less expensive than their non-fried and leaner alternatives.

SOLUTION 1 = Stay on the lookout for deals

- When you find a good deal on fresh meat, fish or potatoes, purchase more and set aside part of it in the freezer for later use.
- Visit local farmers stands and fish markets to get the freshest food and best deals.
- Check out prices of store brand packages of plain frozen vegetables or meats that can be swapped out for the pre-fried versions.
- Replace fried chicken nuggets with a meatless entrée. Beans, peas, and lentils are a great and inexpensive source of lean protein. If you need specific ideas, check out the USDA's [Recipe Finder](#).

SOLUTION 2 = Monitor portion sizes being served

- Often serving sizes are not closely monitored. When children are served too large a portion, food is wasted and you end up spending more money on food than needed. Check out pages 65-66 of Delaware's [Improving Nutrition & Physical Activity Quality Handbook](#) for great pictures of standard serving sizes for children 3-5 years old:

THE CHALLENGE = Lack of Concerns about Fat Intake

Children need a certain level of fat in their diet; however, not all fats are created equal. Fried foods represent one of the less healthy forms of fat, so it is best to limit these kinds of foods.

SOLUTION 1 = Educate yourself, parents, and children about the difference between healthy and unhealthy fats

- Learn more about the different kinds of [Oils and Fats](#) from MyPlate.gov.
- Share information with your families by hosting a workshop to get to know your fats.

- Provide educational pamphlets for parents to take home. For example, page 42 from Delaware’s guide for [Improving Nutrition and Physical Activity Quality](#) could be copied and handed out to parents to provide great ideas for alternatives to frying.

SOLUTION 2 = Replace with healthier, unsaturated fats

- Increase food items that contain polyunsaturated and monounsaturated fats such as fish and nuts
- Use liquid vegetable oils such as olive oil or canola oil instead of lard, shortening, or butter.

THE CHALLENGE = Prep Time and Skills

Fried and pre-fried foods are quick and easy compared to the healthier alternatives.

SOLUTION 1 = Look into healthier cooking techniques

- Meats and vegetables can be baked, roasted, or added to soups – all of which are easy and do not require special equipment.
- For more ideas about healthy cooking options like baking, broiling, and grilling, check out page 42 of Delaware’s [Improving Nutrition & Physical Activity Quality Handbook](#).
- Explore new healthier recipes to go along with these new cooking methods. Check out page 139 of Delaware’s [Improving Nutrition & Physical Activity Quality Handbook](#) for a list of websites with healthy recipe ideas.

SOLUTION 2 = Look for canned alternatives

- Canned vegetables can serve as a good alternative to fresh since they can be stored in a pantry and prepared quickly. A downside to such items however can be the high levels of sodium. Make sure to choose canned items with low sodium or to rinse canned vegetables with water before cooking.
- Canned beans are a great alternative to fried or pre-fried meats. Look for reduced sodium beans and rinse before serving to help limit salt intake.

THE CHALLENGE = Unhealthy Meal Planning

You may offer more than one fried/pre-fried item per day and are unsure how to make the switch.

Solution 1 = Set meal guidelines

- Set a new policy that limits servings of fried foods.
- Work with cooks to limit the percentage of calories that can come from fat. Current guidelines recommend 35%. Delaware Child Care has created a great [Grocery Shopping Cheat Sheet](#) that can be used to help identify food items that are in line with this recommendation.

SOLUTION 2 = Create cycling menu plans

- Check out Delaware’s [Improving Nutrition & Physical Activity Quality Handbook](#) for already created cycle menus that start on page 10 or the menu template on page 36.



Best Practice: Eat meals family-style and let kids serve foods themselves.

Why it's important

Family style dining is a wonderful opportunity to enrich a child's learning environment. Pouring, serving, and passing food helps children practice independence and it can promote language and motor skills.

Learning to use serving utensils allows children to develop fine motor skills. Family style meals provide the opportunity to teach concepts of sharing, taking turns, and table manners. This provides social interaction and can enhance language development.

Family style meals give children the opportunity to take an active role in their feeding as it allows them to make decisions and to take responsibility for their food choices.

When children are allowed to decide their own portion sizes they generally serve themselves a smaller amount and are less likely to overeat.³¹ This decision making process helps to reinforce children's eating according to their internal hunger and fullness cues.

While family style meals present a wonderful learning opportunity for children through self-discovery, it also creates a unique opportunity for us to model healthy food choices and proper table manners.

Common challenges and how to overcome them

THE CHALLENGE = Time Demands

It takes longer to serve and eat meals served family-style.

SOLUTION 1 = Delegate tasks

- Teach children to help set the table and clean up after the meal. Once they learn the skills, it can help speed up transitions before and after meals.
- Check out [More Than Mudpies](#), a nutrition curriculum for preschoolers. Page 11 provides a section dedicated to Mealtime Routines for Health and Manners.

SOLUTION 2 = Teach children meal and snack time routines

- Before family style meals are introduced, talk to children about family style meals. Allow them to practice with pretend foods.
- When family style meals are first introduced, ask children to serve just one food item. As they become comfortable, make them responsible for additional food items. Eventually, they will learn to serve themselves completely.

- Create a full routine around meal and snacks times that includes things like washing hands, setting the table, sitting down at the table, serving food, eating, and cleaning up. This will help bring order to meal and snack times.

SOLUTION 3 = Adjust the daily schedule

- Family style meals can take longer, so the daily schedule might need to be tweaked to provide a few additional minutes for meals and snacks. However, family style meals are a great learning opportunity and a great investment of time.

THE CHALLENGE = Messiness

Family style eating can be seen as messy or unsanitary.

SOLUTION 1 = Use age-appropriate eating equipment

- Age-appropriate utensils and serving tools will be easier for young children to grasp, thereby reducing the chances of dropped food. Use small serving dishes and pitchers, something that is easy for children to lift and pass, and therefore less likely to spill.
- If you do not have age appropriate materials for children to serve themselves, consider putting this into the budget, asking for help from parents and local businesses, or fundraising for this cost as it is a wonderful investment.
- Check out these other great strategies for [Helping Children Be Successful at Serving Themselves and Pass](#) developed by the New York State Department of Health.

SOLUTION 2 = Make clean-up easy

- Designate a clean-up area that is outside of the traffic flow and contains a trashcan and bussing trays.
- Have paper-towels within reach just in case spills occur.

SOLUTION 3 = Adopt strategies to minimize or avoid contamination

- Always remember to have children wash their hands before and after meal time.
- Serve food in small containers with only a limited amount of food in each. If a child sneezes into the serving bowl, then only a small amount of food must be discarded.
- Keep extra serving utensils on hand. If a child drops a utensil or puts it into his/her mouth, the utensil can be switched out immediately and eliminate further contamination.
- If a child is sick, but is still participating in meal time, it is important to consider special arrangements to prevent the spread of illness. This can include using disposable plates, cups and utensils. Also consider having child eat separately from the other children, being sure to explain that this is because you do not want them to spread any germs.

THE CHALLENGE = Lack of Motivation

You may be hesitant to make the switch to family style dining for the same reasons listed above – time required and messiness of meals.

SOLUTION 1 = Learn about family-style dining before adopting it into everyday practice

- Family-style dining offers many benefits for children. Get yourself motivated to make change by finding out why experts encourage family-style meals.
- Watch videos from other child care programs that have adopted family-style dining so that you can see it in action, like this one from the Little Brown School. (Be sure to check out [part 1](#) and [part 2](#).)
- Provide time for an open discussion where you can discuss challenges and brainstorm how to overcome them with your coworkers. Continue to work as a team to provide encouragement and positive support as you begin to adopt these changes.
- Familiarize yourself with family style dining by reading more about it. Check out the following handout about [Making the Most of Mealtimes](#) from the National Association of Child Care Resource & Referral Agencies.

THE CHALLENGE = Nutritional Value

You may be concerned that children will not eat well if allowed to serve themselves.

SOLUTION 1 = Provide positive guidance to children

- Provide a gentle nudge to children by simply asking “How much broccoli would you like today?”
- Be positive role models by showing children how much you like the healthy foods being served.
- Accept that a child may not eat everything that is being served. Try not to comment on how much or little a child is eating, but stay positive and create an open environment for discovery and learning. Check out page 2 of this article from KidsHealth to learn more about [Letting Kids Have Control](#).

SOLUTION 2 = Teach children about the importance of eating healthy foods

- Use meal and snack times to talk with children about the healthy foods being served.
- Incorporate nutrition lessons into other activities like circle time, story time, or center time.

SOLUTION 3 = Encourage children to listen to their hunger and fullness cues

- Teach children how to tell if they are hungry or full. Check out interactive lessons and games such as [Tummy Talk](#) from Cooperative Extension.
- Use this short, fun book called [Tummy Talks](#) to help teach children about hunger cues and fullness by listening to their own bodies.

THE CHALLENGE = Motor Development Level Differences

Not all children may be at the same level of motor skill development, and some children may need more help serving themselves than others.

SOLUTION 1 = Use the buddy system

- During snack times, match older children with more skills with younger ones who need more help.

SOLUTION 2 = Designate adult leaders at every table

- Help children learn to serve their own food using hand-over-hand techniques.
- Sit with the children and model serving, passing, and use of utensils to help children see the proper movements for these skills.
- Remember that meal time can be an educational experience for children. Create a positive environment for exploration and learning. MyPlate offers great suggestions for phrases that [Help and Don't Hinder](#) the development of healthy eating habits.

SOLUTION 3 = Start Small

- Introduce toddlers to family-style dining on a smaller scale. Consider opportunities for them to pour their own water or to select their own muffin from a snack tray. These small opportunities allow toddlers to learn fine motor skills so that they are ready for family-style dining by the time they are preschoolers.
- If preschoolers are not used to family-style dining, start introducing it during snacks when there are fewer foods to serve. Once they learn the basic skills, slowly introduce it during lunch.



Best Practice: Drinking water is visible and available inside and outside for self-serve.

Why it's important

Water makes up over half of a child's body weight and it is essential for their health. Most importantly water helps keep a child growing appropriately and all parts of the body working properly.

To stay hydrated, water should be consumed throughout the day. To encourage children to drink water, it is important to have water visible and available both inside and outside. By making water available, children will turn first to water to quench their thirst after play time. This will help children to develop healthy drinking habits.

Water satisfies thirst without adding extra calories. When used in place of sugar-sweetened beverages and fruit juice, water can help reduce the amount of calories and sugar that children consume during the day and thereby help decrease their risk of becoming overweight.³² Drinking more water and less sugary beverages will also prevent dental caries by decreasing the amount of acid in the mouth.³³

Common challenges and how to overcome them

THE CHALLENGE = Water Is Not Easily Accessible

You don't have the necessary equipment to make water easily accessible.

SOLUTION 1 = Consider your options

- Child height water fountains and water coolers are one strategy for providing water to children. To encourage use, fountains should be located in areas that children will pass frequently.
- Pitchers are a cheap and simple way to make water accessible to children. Pitchers are easy to take outside to provide children with water during outdoor play. Remember to provide drinking cups as well. Keep cups and pitchers small so that children can easily manage them.
- Consider what resources you already have that would make transporting water easier. For example, a wagon can be used to take pitchers and cups outside, then be used as a platform for self-service.
- Placing cups next to the sink is another quick and cheap option. Just make sure that they are protected or in a clean and dry area.
- If you need more helpful tips on serving water in child care settings, check out this [Water Toolkit](#) from the National CACFP Sponsors Association.

THE CHALLENGE = Child Preferences

Children may not want to drink water.

SOLUTION 1 = Make drinking water fun

- Add lemon, lime or orange wedges to water for a touch of added flavor.
- Include children in the serving process by working together to prepare pitchers of water, gather cups and other supplies, and pour water into cups.
- Designate daily “water helpers”.
- Have children bring in a water bottle to decorate that they can use throughout the day.

SOLUTION 2 = Educate children on the importance of water

- Teach children about all the ways water helps them stay healthy – hydration, dental hygiene, etc.
- If you need help with ideas for explaining the importance of water to children, check out the article [Why Drinking Water Is the Way to Go](#) by KidsHealth.

SOLUTION 3 = Be a healthy role model

- Drink water with children so that they will have a healthy role model, and encourage other caregivers to do the same.
- Model proper techniques for pouring and cleaning up spills.

THE CHALLENGE = Safety

Keeping drinking water sanitary can be challenging.

SOLUTION 1 = Practice safe and clean techniques

- Maintain proper drainage of water sources.
- Teach safe drinking water techniques (i.e., drinking from a water fountain and not letting mouth touch the spout).
- Provide single-use paper cups to be used with water fountain or water pitchers.
- Do not serve ice cubes as they can be a choking hazard.

THE CHALLENGE = Messiness

Allowing children constant access to water increases the chance of spills.

SOLUTION 1 = Childproof all activities centered around water serving

- Provide help to children who need assistance with pouring.
- Fill pitchers only half way.
- Use cups with lids.

THE CHALLENGE = Cost

In order to receive CACFP reimbursement, milk must be offered during meals.

SOLUTION 1 = Find opportunities to offer water during the day when it does not compete with milk

- During meals and snacks, serve water after milk if child is still thirsty.
- Serve water after meals or snacks or in between meals.
- Serve water during outdoor play or during physical activity.



Best Practice: Limit 100% fruit juice to no more than one 4- to 6-oz serving per day per child.*

*Encourage parents to support this limit.

Why it's important

The American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP) recommends that children six months and older consume no more than 4-6 ounces of 100% fruit juice per day.³⁴ This amount includes juice that children are receiving at both home and at child care. In addition to this, the AAP recommends that juice is not served in bottles or sippy cups as this can encourage overconsumption.

It is easy for children to consume too much juice without realizing it. Juice tastes good to children, but it offers a highly concentrated form of sugar and calories that may be consumed quickly. Juice also does not trigger the same feeling of satiety that eating whole fruits and vegetables will cause.

Excessive juice consumption in children has been linked to multiple problems. Drinking too much juice may lead children to have decreased appetites for more nutritious foods required for growth and development.³⁵ This may result in feeding problems and consequently an increased risk of obesity.³⁶ The high amount of sugar in fruit juice will also increase a child's risk of tooth decay, diarrhea, and stomach cramps.^{37,38}

It is important for parents and providers to work together to ensure children are not receiving too much juice throughout the day.

Common challenges and how to overcome them

THE CHALLENGE = Child Preferences

Children enjoy fruit juices and ask for them.

SOLUTION 1 = Replace fruit juice with whole fruit

- Fruit is a food that is generally accepted by children. Replacing juice with whole fruit will probably be well accepted by children.

SOLUTION 2 = Offer water instead of fruit juice

- If you have replaced juice with whole fruit during snacks, you can offer water as their drink.
- To make water more acceptable, add a touch of flavor by adding fruit wedges to water.
- Be persistent, and over time children's tastes and expectations will adjust.

SOLUTION 3 = Be a healthy role model

- Limit your own intake of juice. Be mindful of how often you drink juice as well as your portion size.
- Show children that you enjoy eating whole fruit and drinking healthy alternatives like water and low-fat or non-fat milk.
- As you are enjoying whole fruit and healthy beverages, talk with about the benefits of healthy eating and drinking.

THE CHALLENGE = Preparation Time

Serving juice is an easy snack and requires no preparation time.

SOLUTION 1 = Brainstorm alternatives

- Brainstorm other healthy snacks that require no preparation, such as fresh fruit, unsweetened applesauce, granola bars, or whole-grain crackers. Want ideas for fun new snacks? Check out this list of [Crazy Combos](#) from KidsHealth for lots of simple and tasty ideas.

THE CHALLENGE = Parent Misconceptions

Parents encourage children to drink fruit juices because they think they are healthy sources of vitamins and minerals.

SOLUTION 1 = Educate parents about current juice recommendations

- Host an educational workshop at your center to teach parents about healthy eating and drinking practices at home. ChooseMyPlate.gov has helpful suggestions for preschoolers, including these tips on [Beverages](#).
- Send home educational materials to parents with information about healthy beverage choices and tips on how parents can help reduce or eliminate juice consumption at home. Check out this tip sheet about [Water & 100% Juice](#) from the National Resource Center and an article on [Healthy Drinks for Kids](#) from KidsHealth.
- Educate parents about how to identify juice that is 100% fruit juice by using nutrition panels.



Best Practice: Do not offer sugary drinks, including fruit drinks, sports drinks, sweet tea, and soda.

Why it's important

Sweetened drinks, including fruits drinks, sports drinks, sweet tea, and soda, are packed with calories and sugar, but offer little to nothing in terms of nutrients. Children who drink sugar sweetened beverages are at an increased risk for obesity and tooth decay and drinking sugary drinks is associated with calcium deficiency.^{32,35,37}

Common challenges and how to overcome them

THE CHALLENGE = Child Preferences

Sweetened drinks are marketed towards children and thus children ask for them.

SOLUTION 1 = Limit the choices available to only healthy drinks

- If presented with sweeter unhealthy alternatives, children will choose to drink these beverages. By limiting the choices available, children will learn to choose from healthy options like water, low-fat or non-fat milk, or 100% fruit juice.

SOLUTION 2 = Be a healthy role model

- Avoid drinking sugary drinks in front of children. Instead, show children you enjoy healthy beverages like water, low-fat or non-fat milk, and 100% fruit juice.
- Talk with children about what are healthy and unhealthy drink choices so that they learn to make wiser choices on their own.

THE CHALLENGE = Just a treat

You may enjoy drinking sugary drinks and don't see the harm in children having some as well.

SOLUTION 1 = Read about the risks of drinking too many sugary drinks

- Check out this great summary about [What Preschoolers Should Drink](#) from KidsHealth.
- Since many sugary drinks also contain caffeine, you might also find this article about [The Dangers of Caffeine for Children](#) a helpful resource.

THE CHALLENGE = Preparation Time and Cost

Sweetened drinks are packaged more efficiently for snacking purposes and are cheaper.

SOLUTION 1 = Look for single serving packages of healthier options

- If you need the convenience of single serving packages, look for water, milk, and 100% juice in snack size containers. To keep costs low, look for opportunities to buy these items in bulk or on sale.

SOLUTION 2 = Offer water, it's free

- Water doesn't have to be purchased in a bottle. Keep costs to a minimum by offering tap water in pitcher and providing small cups.

SOLUTION 3 = Remember CACFP reimbursement policies

- CACFP reimburses for milk and 100% juice only. They do not reimburse for sugary drinks or watered down beverages.

THE CHALLENGE = Parents' Bad Habits

Parents pack sugary drinks in lunches or send soft drinks for parties or special events.

SOLUTION 1 = Educate parents about the risks of drinking too many sugary drinks

- Send home educational materials to parents with information about healthy beverage choices. KidsHealth offers lots of great articles you can send home about [Healthy Drinks for Kids](#), [What Preschoolers Should Drink](#), and [The Dangers of Caffeine for Children](#).
- Develop a beverage policy that is shared with parents at the beginning of the year outlining what beverages are allowed at the center. Need examples of what policies may look like? Check out pages 16-17 and 22-23 of the Nemours' [Best Practices for Healthy Eating](#).



Best Practice: For children age 2 and older serve low-fat (1%) or non-fat (skim) milk.

Why it's important

Milk is a great source of calcium, vitamin D, potassium, protein, and other nutrients essential for growth of bones and teeth. The American Academy of Pediatrics recommends low-fat or non-fat milk for children ages 2 or older.³⁹ Low-fat and non-fat milk contain as much protein, calcium, and Vitamins D and A as whole milk. The only difference is a reduction in saturated fat and calories.

Common challenges and how to overcome them

THE CHALLENGE = Child Preferences

Children accustomed to whole milk may need some adjustment to make the switch to lower fat milk.

SOLUTION 1 = Test it out

- When changing from whole milk to low-fat or non-fat milk, children will often not realize the change. You might be able to make the switch without even having to talk with children about it.
- There may be some food items where a different type of milk is less noticeable. For example, try making the switch to low-fat or non-fat milk with cereal. Children are also less likely to notice when low-fat or non-fat is used in recipes.
- If children resist the change, remember the importance of multiple exposures to develop taste preferences for new foods and beverages.

SOLUTION 2 = Try to find other ways to make milk more appealing and fun

- Children may have sensitive taste and temperature preferences. Try serving milk cold or in insulated pitchers, or experiment with heating milk on cold days.
- Allow children to serve their own milk using child-size pitchers and cups.
- Use fun cups to serve milk in.

SOLUTION 3 = Be a healthy role model

- Demonstrate positive attitudes about low-fat and non-fat milk in front of the children and drink milk with them when they are drinking it. This will help to encourage children to accept this change.
- Teach children that when we have meals, milk is the healthiest beverage. We drink milk to make our bones strong and grow tall. A poster about [Healthy Eating for Preschoolers](#) from ChooseMyPlate may be helpful.

THE CHALLENGE = Loss of CACFP Reimbursement

You may be concerned that making the switch will cause you to lose the CACFP reimbursement.

SOLUTION 1 = Become familiar with revised CACFP policies

- The Healthy Kids Healthy Future best practice recommendations are in line with CACFP reimbursement policy. According to the Healthy, Hunger-Free Kids Act of 2010, CACFP now requires low-fat (1%) or non-fat (skim) milk be served to children age 2 and above and is reimbursable when served as part of a reimbursable meal.

THE CHALLENGE = Parent Misconceptions

Parents might believe that offering low-fat or non-fat milk is inadequate for growth and development.

SOLUTION 1 = Educate parents that low-fat and non-fat milk are nutritionally appropriate for children

- Share educational materials with parents like this article about [Calcium and Your Child](#) from KidsHealth. Be sure to point out the section about Minding Your Milk that talks about when it is appropriate to make the switch and reassures parents that low-fat and non-fat milk contains all the nutrients as whole milk.
- Host a family night showcasing the benefits of a healthy diet. Be sure to include time to talk about healthy beverage choices and the importance of milk. Have food demonstrations to teach parents about innovative ways to add milk to common recipes.

Breastfeeding Support

As a child care provider, an important thing you can do for babies is support their parents' decisions about infant feeding, especially the mother's breastfeeding (nursing) efforts. Breast milk has many benefits for babies. It helps reduce their risk of obesity, defend against infections (keeping infants from getting sick with things like diarrhea and ear infections), and protect against a number of conditions like asthma, diabetes, and sudden infant death syndrome (SIDS).⁴⁰ You can provide support by having a designated, private area for breastfeeding mothers to feed, pump, or bottle feed their infants.





Best Practice: Breastfeeding mothers have access to a private room* for breastfeeding or pumping, other than a bathroom.

*The room should offer appropriate seating and privacy.

Why it's important

The American Academy of Pediatrics recommends that babies be breastfed exclusively for the first six months of life, introduced to complementary foods around 6 months of age, and continue breastfeeding until at least 12 months of age.⁴⁰ Breastfeeding provides positive benefits to both baby and mother.

Breast milk protects infants against multiple health problems, including diarrhea, ear infections, severe lower respiratory infections, asthma, leukemia, sudden infant death syndrome (SIDS), type 2 diabetes, and obesity.⁴⁰

Breastfeeding mothers have lower risks of breast and ovarian cancer, and emerging evidence shows that breastfeeding may also protect women from high blood pressure, diabetes, cardiovascular disease, and postpartum depression.⁴⁰

On average, mothers who work outside the home breastfeed for a shorter length of time. Therefore, child care settings are crucial supports for mothers who wish to continue to breastfeed while working outside the home.

Common challenges and how to overcome them

THE CHALLENGE = Space Constraints

You may not have a whole room to set aside for breastfeeding or may be unsure of what is needed for a lactation room.

SOLUTION 1 = Convert a corner or private space into a breastfeeding station

- Set up a breastfeeding station in an area of the room that is rarely used.
- Use a curtain or foldable partition to create a private space for mothers. Furniture, like a tall bookshelf, can also be used to divide space and create a more private space.

SOLUTION 2 = Learn more about what breastfeeding mothers need in that space.

- Start with a comfortable chair and small table.
- Allow access to an electrical outlet so that mothers can use a breast pump.
- Breastfeeding mothers may also need access to a sink, a cooler or refrigerator space, and a waste basket.

- What you choose to include in this space can vary – from providing just the essentials to deluxe accommodations. The Wisconsin Department of Health Services offers three different examples of how a lactation room might be furnished. Check out page 28 of their [Ten Steps to Breastfeeding Friendly Child Care Centers](#).

THE CHALLENGE = Unsure How to Support Breastfeeding

You may feel like you do not have the knowledge and training to provide breastfeeding support.

SOLUTION 1 = Find educational materials and trainings about breastfeeding

- Learn about the [benefits of breastfeeding](#) for both mother and child so you feel confident talking with mothers about breastfeeding and the specific ways that you can support their decision to breastfeed.
- Learn how to [Be a Caregiver Who Supports the Breastfeeding Mother](#) by reviewing
- Look for trainings on breastfeeding. The Texas Department of State Health Services has created a thorough training on [How to Support a Breastfeeding Mother](#) that covers the benefits of breastfeeding, safe handling of breast milk, recognizing infant hunger cues, and how child care providers can support mothers who are breastfeeding. Even if you have only 10 minutes, simple educational videos, like this one about [How to Support Breastfeeding Mothers & Families](#), can be helpful.

THE CHALLENGE = Parents are Unaware of Breastfeeding Support Offered

Mothers may not use available resources because they do not know they exist or are unsure how welcoming you are to breastfeeding.

SOLUTION 1 = Create a written breastfeeding policy for your child care center or home.

- Ensure that the policy states that your program actively supports breastfeeding mothers and is clearly posted. Be sure that the policy addresses how breast milk is stored, the resources and support you can offer, and your encouragement for breastfeeding mothers.
- If you need help with developing these policies, check out page 40 of Wisconsin Department of Health Services' handbook on [Ten Steps to Breastfeeding Friendly Child Care Centers](#) for policy recommendations.

SOLUTION 2 = Become a valuable resource for your mothers

- Create a breastfeeding friendly environment that provides natural opportunities for parents to see your support for breastfeeding. Check out page 21 of Wisconsin Department of Health Services' handbook on [Ten Steps to Breastfeeding Friendly Child Care Centers](#) for ideas about what this looks like.
- Make breastfeeding a part of any infant feeding plan discussion with parents and respect parents' choices about infant feeding.

- Incorporate information about breastfeeding into parent newsletters or your program’s social media. Use these outlets to share information about the many benefits of breastfeeding that led to the American Academy of Pediatrics recommendations for breastfeeding. Great information geared toward parents about [Breastfeeding vs. Formula Feeding](#), [Safely Storing Breast Milk](#), [Solids and Supplementing](#), and [Finger Foods for Babies](#) are also available from KidsHealth.
- Compile and maintain a list of local breastfeeding resources and support organizations (such as La Leche League). Make sure these are easily accessible for families. Also, be sure to refer parents with questions to the appropriate organization.

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