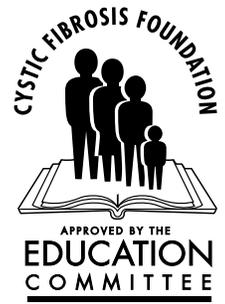


Nutrition



How to Encourage Healthy Eating

Good nutrition is very important for people with cystic fibrosis (CF). Getting children to eat well, however, can be a challenge. Fortunately, there are things parents and caregivers can do to help children eat well to stay healthy.

Plan Ahead

Have three meals and three scheduled snacks every day, at about the same time every day. This gives children time to get hungry between meals and snacks and increases the likelihood that they will eat more and try new foods.

Before starting a meal or snack, do your best to have all the food ready. This will help you be available during mealtimes to spend time with your child and give your child lots of attention and praise for eating.

Reduce distractions (no TV, toys, handheld games, mp3 players or books at the table).

Do not cook entirely separate meals for different family members. Plan one menu for the whole family. However, be sure to make appropriate adjustments to ensure a high-energy/high-calorie meal for your child with CF.

Make Mealtimes Structured

Let your child know that it's time to eat. State this in a factual tone. Say "It's breakfast time," rather than asking "Would you like some breakfast now?"

Do not coax and beg your children to eat or punish them for not eating. Children do what gets their parents' attention. If they get attention for not



eating, they will continue to refuse to eat. If your child is not eating, ignore his or her behavior and engage in conversation with others at the table.

Sit where you are close to your children and have direct eye contact with them.

Role model good eating behavior for your child. By sitting at the table and having a positive attitude towards eating and trying new foods, you set a good example for your child.

Praise your children when they are eating well. If they get attention for eating, they will do more of it. Praise even small steps, like taking small bites and swallowing. Be quick to praise eating when it occurs after you have been ignoring not eating during a meal.

Limit the length of meals to about 20 minutes. When mealtime is over, clear your children's plates (even if they have not eaten much) and do not offer food until the next scheduled meal or snack time.

Reward your child for good meal-time behavior. If your child eats well, give him or her a non-food treat (for example, watching a video, special time with you) after the meal. Ask the dietitian, nurse, social worker or psychologist at your center for ideas in developing a reward system.

Give Choices

Do not try to "trick" your child by hiding new or disliked foods in food they like. For example, do not try to hide green beans in mashed potatoes. Your child will not trust you and may stop eating foods he or she likes.

Let young children choose whether to open their enzyme capsules or have you do it for them. Let older children choose whether they want a milkshake or a peanut butter sandwich for snack.



Allow your child to choose between 2 high-energy/high-calorie additives to foods (for example, extra cheese or extra butter).

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Even if your child chooses not to eat a new food, keep offering it. It often takes 10-15 “exposures” to new foods before children are willing to try them.

Emotions and Attitudes

Try not to worry if a meal ends and your child has not eaten much. If you stick to the three meals-three snacks approach, he or she will eventually get hungry. If you are relaxed and matter-of-fact about eating, your child is most likely to adopt this same approach.



Have a relaxed discussion with your child about the importance of healthy eating, at a time other than meals or clinic. Make sure he/she understands, in age-appropriate terms, the reasons for eating high-energy/high-calorie foods.

Give your child an opportunity to express his or her feelings about having to eat a lot and about having CF. Let your child know that you understand his/her frustrations. Children who can put their feelings into words often feel less need to rebel by refusing to eat.

Talk frequently with the dietitian, nurse, social worker and/or psychologist in your center for support and suggestions.

Ask the dietitian, nurse, social worker and/or psychologist to connect you with another parent of a child with CF who has worked hard to overcome eating challenges.

If you have questions about “Nutrition: Ways to Encourage Healthy Eating,” or if you need additional resources on this topic, call your CF dietitian, social worker, or psychologist. If you have questions about any aspect of CF care, contact your CF care provider.

It is very important to keep your regular visits at your CF care center. This will help the CF care providers monitor the health, growth and nutrition needs of your child.

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