



# Happy and relaxed meal times for children

Healthy @ Home // [www.naqlld.org](http://www.naqlld.org)

Nutrition Australia Qld

Mealtimes provide an opportunity for your child to develop good eating behaviours.

## Mealtimes are when children can:

- Learn about healthy eating and food variety
- Make some of their own food choices
- Think about how hungry or full they feel
- Talk together with parents, other family members and friends about their day and about the food at the meal
- Observe their parents as role models for healthy eating behaviours

## Some tips to promote relaxed, happy and positive mealtimes in your home:

- Ask your child to help in meal planning – ask them for some ideas about what they would like to have for meals over the coming week
- Ensure your child sits down to eat and is comfortable at meal and snack times
- Get your child involved in helping to set the table as well as clearing dishes at the end of the meal
- Expect a bit of mess at mealtimes, remember - children learn through play. However, throwing or spitting of food should not be allowed

- Encourage your child to try new foods, however never force or pressure your child to eat
- Be a good role model – eat the foods you expect your child to eat
- Your child will know when they are hungry and when they have had enough to eat – so listen to them when they talk about their hunger level
- Food should never be used to comfort, as a reward or denied as a punishment for behaviour
- Avoid labelling foods “good” or “bad”- keep discussions about food positive and focus on the health benefits as well as shape, colour and variety

**Remember, if children are tired they will be less interested in trying new foods**



**For healthy recipes:** [www.healthyfoodhealthyplanet.org/healthy-recipes](http://www.healthyfoodhealthyplanet.org/healthy-recipes)