

# 2 Everyday and sometimes food



Parents want their children to be healthy, to eat lots of different foods and have happy family meal times. Thinking about how we learnt about food and how we talk to children about food, can be a helpful place to start if meal times are getting tricky.

## Everyday and Sometimes Foods

We can help children to learn that all foods are okay to eat. If we change the words we use to 'everyday' and 'sometimes' foods, this helps children to know that some foods are eaten more often than others. For example, if a child asks for chocolate for breakfast, it's okay to say "no, your body needs an everyday food for breakfast".

When foods are called 'bad', 'naughty', 'not allowed' or 'treats', children quickly learn that these foods are more exciting than the 'good', 'boring' or 'allowed' foods. When foods are not allowed, it is natural to want them more. Children may try extra hard to have them, or overeat when they do get to have these foods.

All foods have a place. It's the job of the adult, not the children, to choose which foods are best to eat at meal and snack times. Try to focus on making enjoyable, tasty snacks and meals that include both sometimes and everyday foods.

### Everyday Foods:



Breads and cereals  
(oats, rice, barely, pasta etc.)



Dairy



Fruits



Vegetables

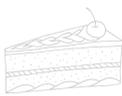


Meat and meat substitutes  
(eggs, tofu, beans etc.)

### Sometimes Foods:



Ice cream



Cake



Chips



Chocolate



Soft drinks,  
sports drinks



Take away foods



Biscuits



Muesli bars etc.

### Questions to think about your own experience with food include:

- What were meal times like when you were growing up?
- Were you forced to eat foods you did not like?
- Did you help with cooking and baking?
- Do you see foods as 'good' and 'bad' or are you happy to eat a little bit of everything?

## More about sometimes foods:

- **Banning foods** – this does not work! Children will want the food more and will find a way to get it. They will use nagging, tantrums, take it out of a friend's lunch box, eat lots of it at a party or a friend or grandparent's house.
- **Food rewards** – this is using food as a reward for good behaviour or for doing a good job. This will teach children to eat when they are not hungry.
- **It's okay to say yes** – adults decide when children have sometimes foods. For example, take away once a week, an occasional meal in a food court, a snack in a lunch box.
- **It's okay to say no** – any upset will be quickly forgotten with no lasting effects.
- **Having sometimes foods too often** – giving children too many sometimes foods can change the tastes they prefer and they might find it hard to enjoy everyday foods like fruits and vegetables.

## Children learn by watching you!

Adults are the biggest role model for children. Children will learn how to eat by watching you and other adults. This starts when they are a baby and they watch you when you eat.

You can help them learn by:

- Talking about foods in a neutral way e.g. 'everyday' and 'sometimes' foods.
- Do not use 'diet talk' e.g. "I shouldn't eat this, it's fattening" or "I'm being naughty eating this".
- Don't use food as a reward.

