

Two-Minute Tips

COVID-19 Edition: Food and Nutrition

The new guidelines will require some adjustments during meal times. Despite the changes, meal times can still be a good opportunity to promote positive social interaction and rich conversation.

Practice Tips

Make Handwashing at Meal Time Fun!

Teach children to sing a handwashing song, specific to meal time, while they wash their hands.

Example: (to the tune of “The Muffin Man”)

Before eating: “Are you ready to eat lunch now, eat lunch now, eat lunch now. Before you start to eat your food, you’ve got to wash your hands!”

After eating: “I just finished eating my food, eating my food, eating my food. I then cleaned up all my mess, and now I’m washing my hands!”

For more tips on how to encourage children to wash their hands, refer to the *Handwashing and General Hygiene Two-Minute Tips*.

Make Meal Times Count

Meal times are a great opportunity to promote language development. Ask open-ended questions and expand on their responses to encourage child engagement.

[Meal Talk Cards](#) is a great resource to use for supporting conversation between children during meal times.

Make Meal Time Preparation Safe

During COVID-19, one staff member should serve everyone. Food may be prepped and set up prior to children sitting down at the table. This will allow children to start eating as soon as they get to the table, which helps

avoid contaminating the table or food items before the meal has begun.

Consider sectioning off table spaces to help children with physical distancing during meals. Also consider using placemats with labels or outlines that designate where to place plates, cups, and utensils. This can help keep each child’s space contained.



Try Small Group Meals

Separate children into two groups to stagger meal times. Have one group play while the other group eats, and vice versa. This can aid with physical distancing between children at the tables. You can also try to spread out seating so that children are as far apart as possible.

Tips in Action!

Watch these videos* to see:

- An example of a positive, [child-focused interaction](#) during lunch time.
- Engaging [back and forth conversation](#) between a provider and children during snack time.
- An example of encouraging engagement through [scaffolding](#) during lunch time. Click [here](#) to see the same video with Spanish subtitles.

*Disclaimer: Linked media was filmed before COVID-19. Please follow the necessary guidelines to make these tips helpful and safe for your program.

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