



Meal Planning

Meal planning can be difficult when trying to feed many children at one time. You might often catch yourself saying, “What should I make them today?” It is important to think of the children as you plan meals. Research has found that well balanced nutritional meals greatly benefit young children both physically and mentally. Here are a few things to consider when planning meals at your center.

- Think about serving a variety of food. Use different colored fruits and vegetables so it looks colorful and interesting to the children.
- Have the children help with the preparation of the food. Even if they just wash the food, they are still involved.
- Try and use fresh foods whenever possible. Look for fruits and vegetables that are in season. When fresh fruits or vegetables are not available or convenient, the next best thing is frozen, then canned. (If using canned vegetables, choose low sodium. If using canned fruit, choose light syrup or packed in own juice.)
- Consider making homemade baby food. It is quick and easy. All you need is a strainer or blender.
- Think about your meals ahead of time, and try new recipes or food. This helps introduce new foods into the children’s diet. Who knows. . .they may like it.
- Serve whole milk to children under two. When children reach age two, consider serving low fat milk.
- Don’t give up! Children might not like the food the first time it is served. Make sure to reintroduce foods and modify textures and cooking techniques.
- Whenever possible, serve whole grains over refined (whole grain pasta, whole grain bread, etc.)

Remember. . .meals do not have to be extravagant, and time consuming. Keep it simple, nutritious, and balanced, and you won’t have a problem.

