



Role Modelling



Families and child care providers help children develop healthy eating habits when they model healthy eating behaviours and positive body image. Children are more likely to eat colourful vegetables and fruit and other healthy foods and drinks when they see others eating and enjoying them.

Children are always watching and listening. What child care providers say and do have a significant impact on what children see as “normal.”

Whether you mean to or not, your actions, attitudes, words, and behaviours influence children’s food choices, food behaviours, and body image.

Child care providers’ and families’ attitudes toward healthy living, as well as their food choices, truly influence children’s lifestyle and nutrition habits. When children see that their caregivers value healthy eating, they may also begin to see the importance of making healthy food choices. However, the reverse is also true. If children see adults eating or drinking nutritionally poor choices, they receive the wrong or contradictory message from their role models.

WHAT IS POSITIVE ROLE MODELLING?

Positive role modelling is when adults enjoy eating well and being physically active, and talk about their lifestyle habits and body in a positive way. This helps children value healthy eating, enjoy moving their bodies, and accept and feel good about themselves.

BENEFITS OF POSITIVE ROLE MODELLING:

- Reinforces healthy eating and body image education
- Encourages children to value and enjoy healthy eating
- Develops children’s preferences for healthy foods and beverages
- Shows others that the child care setting takes the health of its children seriously

TIPS FOR POSITIVE ROLE MODELLING:

- Encourage healthy choices by enjoying a variety of colourful vegetables and fruit at each meal and snack.
 - Show children you are open to and excited to try new vegetables and fruit, and enjoy eating them in different ways.



- Avoid sharing personal dislike for foods or stating you do not eat certain foods.
- Let children choose what to eat from the healthy foods offered; show them how to politely say “no thank you.”
- Avoid categorizing foods as “good” or “bad.”
- Respect that healthy bodies come in a variety of shapes and sizes, and that healthy bodies look different for everyone.
 - Avoid commenting on the size, shape, or appearance of yourself and others.
 - Focus on positive attributes in yourself and others that are not related to appearance, such as attitudes, efforts, skills, talent, and abilities.
 - Avoid making assumptions on children’s eating habits and activity levels based on their weight/shape.
- Eat regular meals and snacks, pay attention to hunger and fullness cues, and encourage children to do the same.
 - When possible, choose from the same food and beverages offered to children.
 - Eat with children, when possible. Use this time to talk about the foods offered and role model proper utensil use and table manners.



WHAT IS YOUR ROLE MODELLING PRACTICE?

Reflect on if or how your behaviours show positive role modelling when you eat together with children.

Ways to set a good example:

- Choose from the same foods and beverages served to children, when appropriate.
- Avoid bringing in personal food and beverages in the child care areas.
- Refrain from using personal electronics (e.g., cell phones) during snack and meal times.
- Refrain from making negative comments about the food and beverage choices served.
- Refrain from conversations about body size, amount of food eaten, dieting, and weight loss.
- Treat all children the same way regardless of their body size or shape (e.g., avoid making judgment on the amount of food a child chooses to eat).
- Refrain from making assumptions about how well or poorly a child will eat based on their weight.