

# Well-being through daily meals – support, skills and security for schoolchildren



**Balanced eating is built on regularity, sufficiency, variety, flexibility and a permissible attitude.**

Together, these contribute to a child's physical and mental well-being.

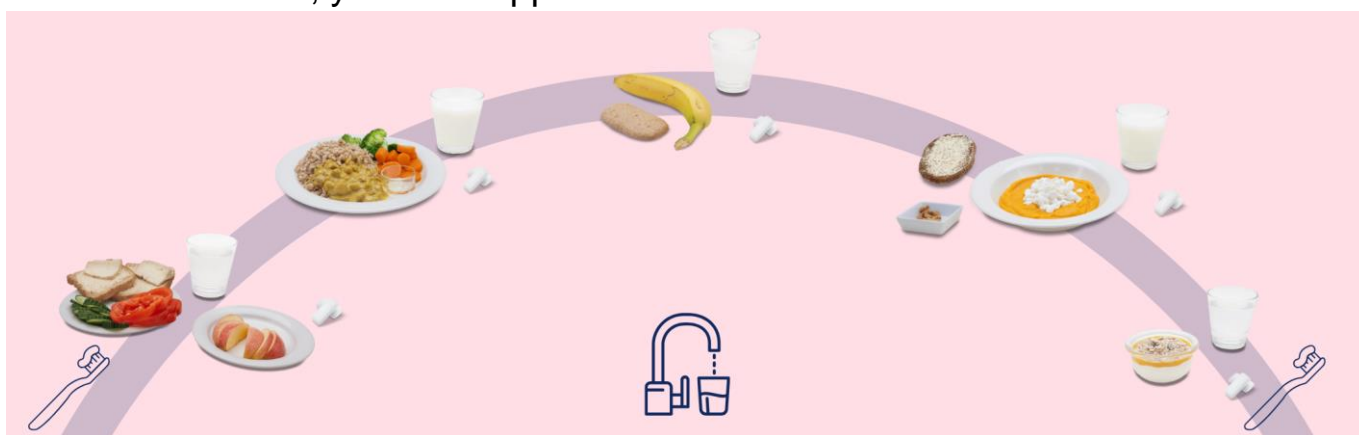
**For most people, eating every 3 to 4 hours, or 4 to 6 times per day, is the best option.** Eating regularly ensures that the child will gain energy steadily throughout the day, improves alertness, supports the interpretation of signals of hunger and satiety, and also promotes oral health. There is no need to eat exactly at the same time every day; instead, plan mealtimes to flexibly sync with your other daily activities.

Breakfast is an important part of a schoolchild's day. It helps them to keep going and stay focused during the morning lessons and offers a good start to the day. School meals are an important part of daily nutrition, and often also a necessary break between lessons. At home, you can support

a positive attitude towards school meals by showing interest in them: for example, ask what was on offer at school and whether the child enjoyed the food. Such discussions without any criticism will instill in the child a feeling of the importance of eating at school.

**A snack after the school day will keep the child going and prevent intense hunger pangs before the next meal.** It is the responsibility of the custodian to ensure that a schoolchild has the opportunity to prepare a varied snack and that they receive the necessary guidance to do so.

**A dinner or evening meal is an essential part of the whole.** When the child is offered a varied and balanced meal after the school day, eating will not consist solely of snacks. A hot meal is often more nutritious than several snacks.



**A child cannot be assumed to take responsibility for their eating alone.**

Sharing the responsibility can be gradually practised based on the child's age and individual level of development. However, it is the responsibility of the custodian to arrange regular mealtimes and ensure that healthy choices are available.

**A child learns a lot by watching what adults say and do.** Eating habits, the attitude towards food and one's body, and emotional regulation are developed through example. Adults talking about food in a respectful and appreciative manner is important. Avoid categorising food items as 'good' or 'bad' and emphasise variety and balance instead. Different types of food items can be part of a balanced diet. Food should not be used as a reward, a source of comfort or a tool to regulate one's emotions.

The way you talk about bodies is also of great importance. **Do not comment on the child's body or weight, or those of others.** Teach the child that all bodies are valuable and unique. This will support the development of a positive body image.

**Boundaries are part of care and nurture.** For example, limiting the availability of treats or controlling the child's food shopping are ways to support the child's well-being. Common rules will make daily life easier and create security. Agreeing on common ground rules is especially important if the child has more than one home or regularly spends time

with other caring adults, such as their grandparents. Food and related practices should not be a source of conflict between the adults, as the child needs consistency in their daily routine.

**Discussing money with a school-age child is also a good idea:** how much money is the child allowed to spend on food shopping and in what situations? This will support the making of healthy choices and teach the child responsibility.

**Having meals together as a family is much more than just about eating.** They are important moments in your daily life to stop, be present and share the news of the day. At the same time, the child will learn table manners and see an example of balanced eating. Eating together will boost interaction within the family and create safe routines that support the child's positive attitude towards food. When mealtimes are peaceful and unhurried, they are a pleasant experience. That is why keeping the dinner table free from digital devices and other distractions is important.



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