

Parent Resource

Mindful Eating for Infants and Toddlers Starts With You

This infographic has key elements to how you can build mindful eating habits with your infant or toddler.

Click the image to be taken to Zero to Three's website.

MINDFUL EATING FOR INFANTS AND TODDLERS STARTS WITH YOU.

When we start with our self, we bring mindfulness to our own relationship with food, hunger and the body.



We think about self-regulation in eating

- noticing when we're hungry and when we're full
- taking time to enjoy our food
- eating without distractions such as phones or TV

We attend to our emotions

- noticing emotions we feel
- recognizing when emotions are moving us to eat
- exploring different ways of responding to emotions other than eating

We practice self-compassion

- accepting our body as it is
- appreciating what our body does for us rather than how it looks
- acknowledging our responses to food without judging



Children are naturally mindful eaters.

They self-adjust how much they eat based on the nutritional content of their food, automatically eating less when foods are nutrient dense. They also go through appetite changes that reflect their normal growth patterns—for example, eating more when they are growing quickly. So, consider the balance of their eating week by week, not day by day or meal to meal. When we offer children a variety of foods across a week of mealtimes and let them develop their own relationship with new foods, they self-regulate their eating well.

Ways we can create the right conditions for young children's mindful eating are:

- **Use a Responsive Feeding approach** – parent provides, child decides. This means that parents offer a variety of healthy foods in age-appropriate servings at each meal and children decide what, and how much, to eat.
- **Offer balanced meals with a variety of foods** having different colors, textures and smells.
- **Create a predictable daily eating pattern** – offer opportunities to eat (meals/snacks) at regular times each day.
- **Make feeding a time for nurturing connection** – bring mindful awareness to your interactions during mealtime. Be present and minimize distractions (no screens!).
- **Model what you want to see** – show your child how you eat and enjoy healthy food.
- **Observe your baby's cues.** Sometimes when babies cry, they aren't always hungry. They may want attention, cuddles, or a chance to move or play.

