

Nutrition Times

Prepared monthly by South Zone dietitians, Nutrition Services

Cook With Your Child to Raise a Healthy Eater

Want your family to enjoy interesting, healthy meals? Have meal times become the same few recipes over and over, or a variety of frozen dinners and fast foods? Often cooking falls to one parent or the other. Being the only person responsible for preparing food in a household can be a lot of work and may lead to serving the same meals over and over or giving up on cooking.

Rather than settling for popping a frozen pizza in the oven or working away at the stove all alone, try cooking with your children. Cooking with your family may help to make food preparation a little easier, more fun, and no doubt become a valued part of your parent-child relationship.

Healthy foods are vital to nourish strong bodies and smart brains. A diet low in variety or the amount of essential nutrients may affect your child's health and ability to perform at their best.



Healthy eating and food preparation skills are important things you can share with your children and are an investment in your family.

Preparing food and cooking together helps your child in many ways:

- learning by example with hands on experiences - cooking together is ideal;
- demonstrating that you value a healthy lifestyle and that your children are important in helping your family achieve this;
- preparing foods helps kids become more familiar with them and this may help them eat a wider variety of foods; children and youth are often afraid of new or different foods.
- improving cooking skills for you and your child, which helps builds confidence to later cook on their own; and
- building and applying math and science skills by adjusting recipes and measuring foods.

Upcoming Classes

Brooks: All classes are Free

Baby Building and Prenatal Nutrition Class: TBA. Register at 403-501-3300.

Alberta Healthy Living Program Classes: ongoing; call 403-793-6659 to register.

Medicine Hat: All classes are Free

Nutrition and Healthy Eating during Pregnancy: Oct 26, November 16, 7-9pm. Call 403-502-8215 to register. Not just for first time moms; come find out what is new!

Baby Steps Infant Nutrition: Oct 19 or Nov 30, at Community Health Services, 2948 Dunmore Rd SE, drop in. Call 403-502-8215 for info.

Alberta Healthy Living Program Classes: ongoing; call 403-529-8969 to register.

Lethbridge: All classes are Free

Pre- and Postnatal Nutrition Classes: ongoing; call 403-388-6668 to register.

Alberta Healthy Living Program Classes: ongoing; call 403-388-6654 to register.

Contact:

If you have questions about information in this article, contact your local Registered Dietitian at Community Health Services:

801 1st Avenue South
Lethbridge, AB T1J 4L5 403.388.6666

2948 Dunmore Road SE
Medicine Hat, AB T1A 8E3 403.502.8200

440 3rd Street East
Brooks, AB T1R 1B3 403.501.3300

Finding time to plan, shop and cook with your children may be a challenge due to the different schedules of many working parents and child activities. But as your children develop skills they will be able to help out more and share in the jobs. It is easier to build healthy habits and skills now than it is to correct them later on. In addition to cooking with your kids try the following:

- Take kids grocery shopping. Teach them to group foods into the Canada's Food Guide Food Groups: Vegetable and Fruits, Grain Products, Milk and Alternatives and Meat and Alternatives.
- Older children can help plan the menu at home and then choose the foods to match the menu items while shopping. Choose new foods to try, such as a new fresh, frozen, or canned vegetable.
- Get your child involved in a community garden, or start your own garden at home. Planting, growing and harvesting a garden helps children to enjoy active living, and they will learn more skills. You will all enjoy the flavours of fresh vegetables and fruits.

Find more tips on cooking and eating with kids in the following tools/resources:

- The Cooking Club manual. Start a neighbourhood or afterschool cooking club with your kids and their friends:
<http://www.albertahealthservices.ca/assets/info/nutrition/if-nfs-cooking-club.pdf>
- Inspiring healthy eating: Find nutrition tips and recipes for healthy eating at
<http://www.albertahealthservices.ca/10996.asp>
- Find short clips on feeding your children on the Vimeo site at:
<https://vimeo.com/raisingourhealthykids/videos/page:2/sort:date>