



**OH**  
**baby!**



Ohio Department of Health

**Help me grow**



**Helpful Tips & Practical  
Advice for Raising Baby**

## Helping You & Baby Grow Together

This guide will help you be the best possible parent and first teacher as:

- ★ Children learn best when they feel secure and know they are loved.
- ★ Your children will learn from you all day, every day.
- ★ Your words and actions will become theirs.

## Practical Advice for New Families

Even with really knowing your child and understanding childhood development, you will experience times when your baby is out of sorts. This is OK and perfectly natural.

This guide will help you remember that young children:

- ★ Are active and into everything. Activity should be encouraged, not discouraged, but a child's safety is top priority.
- ★ Need to know what's acceptable and what's not. Communicate this consistently and in a serious voice.
- ★ Need transitions. Your baby needs to know a change is coming and some time to adapt to it.
- ★ Are more prone to meltdowns, tantrums – even biting – when they're tired, hungry or not feeling well.



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## ✓ Follow the Basics

### Show You Care

- ★ Pick up your infant when she cries. This is not spoiling her. You're teaching her that what she's feeling is important and that you are there for her. She will learn you are always there and will feel safe and ready to learn.
- ★ Be patient though it's not always easy. Children haven't had the practice or experiences we have had. They need to learn how to use their bodies and how things work so treat spills and accidents as learning moments.
- ★ Spend one-on-one time with your baby who wants to be with you. Talk and cuddle often.
- ★ Praise your infant and toddler! It teaches them more than criticism.
- ★ Make learning fun! For children, playing is learning. Play with your baby and you'll be a teacher in the process.
- ★ Talk to your doctor about your child's development and use resources such as Help Me Grow. Don't expect more than your child is capable of, but also realize that when play things are too easy, they will not teach your child new skills. Playtime should be engaging but not frustrating.

## ✓ Keep Your Child Safe During Sleep

### Take Precautions

- ★ Always lay infants on their backs to sleep. Once a child rolls over on their own, you don't need to roll them back over.
- ★ Keep crib bumper pads out of cribs. Infants can become trapped against the cushion and stop breathing. Toddlers can use the bumper pads as a "step" to help them climb out of the crib.
- ★ Remove pillows, soft bedding, stuffed animals and blankets from cribs. These items can possibly contribute to the risk of Sudden Infant Death Syndrome.
- ★ Keep curtains and window blinds away from crib.

## ✓ Prevent Shaken Baby Syndrome

Shaking a baby can cause irreversible brain damage and death.

Tell EVERYONE who watches your children not to shake them.



### NEVER Shake a Baby, Instead of Shaking...

- ★ Place the child in the crib or somewhere safe. Walk away until you calm down. It's OK if the baby keeps crying while you're calming down.
- ★ Call a relative, friend, child abuse prevention hotline or 911 if you feel you're going to shake or injure a child. Getting help is OK and is the right thing to do!
- ★ Once you are calm, pick the baby up and check to see if she's hungry, needs changed or is being pinched by clothing. If she continues to cry, call a relative or friend for help or call the baby's doctor.
- ★ Babies can sense when you are stressed. Remaining calm may help keep the baby calm.

## ✓ Help Your Child Learn to Talk

Infants learn to talk by listening to others.

The way you talk to your children has a big impact on how well they learn to talk, how they interact with peers and can affect how well they do in school.

### Have Conversations

- ★ Though infants can't talk back with words or answer questions you ask, they love to hear your voice and will respond to your attention. They'll coo and babble in reply and to get you to notice them.
- ★ Toddlers learn new words through conversations. They learn the names of objects, people, colors and sounds of objects when you interact with them. Ask questions, toddlers love to use their new gestures and words. It makes them feel proud.
- ★ Limit the use of "telling" words, like "Come here," "Don't do that," or "Pick that up." These phrases don't teach children new words that will help them learn to read and converse with others.

### Have Fun with Language

- ★ Infants and toddlers love to sing songs and recite nursery rhymes. Find these at your local library or on the Internet. Remember, children don't care if you can't carry a tune! It's the positive interaction with you that matters to them!
- ★ Babble back to your baby. It isn't silly...it's important!

### Describe What You're Doing

- ★ When changing diapers, getting dressed, putting on coats and hats or packing for a visit to grandma, describe each step as you're doing it. You'll be teaching your child new words, identifying actions and sequencing (what comes first, next and last).
- ★ When you describe what's going on, your child becomes an active learner. His attention is focused and his brain picks up on all you do and say!



## ☑ Help Your Child Learn to Read

Learning to read starts in infancy. As a child's first teacher, there are some simple activities you can do to help her begin.

Cuddling up and sharing the experience is the key to reading success.

### Make Up Short, Simple Stories

- ★ Use your child's name and his favorite toy, or include yourself in the story as you "go on an adventure."
- ★ Use family pictures or simple pictures from a magazine/newspaper as a starting point for a story or describe what's going on in the picture.

### Make Books

Secure photos or magazine pictures on cardboard or put into small photo albums. You can write words for the pages, or leave blank.

### Be a Role Model

Read something every day. Look at a newspaper article, a recipe, the mail, a book. Your child wants to be like you and if he sees you reading, he will want to read, too.

### Expose Baby to Books

No need to use videos that claim to help babies read. By exposing baby to books and your loving guidance, your child is on the right track to being a successful reader.

## Let Children Hold and Explore Board Books

- ★ They may put the book in their mouth; gently remove it and help infants hold it.
- ★ Toddlers will want to hold the book and turn the pages, they love to be independent. This is a good teaching tool to let them be in charge.
- ★ Toddlers may want to start at the end of the book or skip around. This is OK. It's more important, at this age that they learn to love books and that books are engaging and fun. They will learn automatically that books have a beginning, middle and end.
- ★ Tell a story about the book's pictures. You don't have to read the words.
- ★ Keep board books where children can get them. They like to be independent. Remember, they will get torn and chewed on.
- ★ Infants and toddlers don't have the skill to use books with paper pages. You'll need to help them use these types of books.



## ☑ Help Your Child Learn to Walk

New parents are often excited to have their child walk and once they start, there's no stopping them.

### Children Are Wired to Move

- ★ Limit the amount of time infants spend in swings, jumpers and exersaucers. Though infants may "stand" in jumpers and exersaucers they are not using their leg muscles and hips correctly in a way that supports walking.
- ★ Allow children to play safely and freely inside and outside for much of the day. They will strengthen the right muscles and learn how to move their body to make it "go."
- ★ Don't use walkers. They don't help children learn to walk. Children in walkers are higher than when sitting on the floor and can possibly reach items that could cause injury. Walkers can easily topple over and go down stairs injuring the child.
- ★ Provide toys that children can pull up on and push safely. Children like to hold the edges of the furniture to steady themselves as they cruise.
- ★ Be aware of end tables and coffee tables, especially those with sharp corners.
- ★ Block off heaters, fireplaces and stairs.



## ☑ Monitor TV, Video, DVD & Computer Use

Young children learn by doing. They learn from hands-on practice and from experiences with peers and adults.

### TV Does Not Engage Children or Assist Them in Learning

- ★ The American Academy of Pediatrics recommends no child under the age of 2 watch any form of media and children 2 years and over should be limited to 30 minutes a day. The program must be suitable for very young children.
- ★ Children are impacted by watching adult content, including the TV news. Images make lasting impressions on children and can have a negative impact on their development.



## ✓ Guide Your Child's Behavior: What to Do When My Infant Toddler...

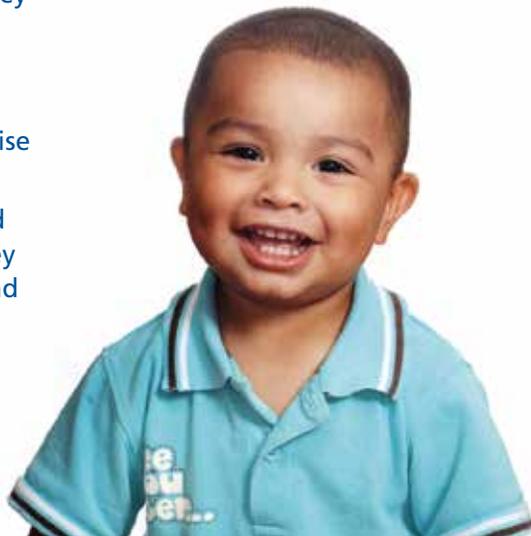
Misbehavior is one way children communicate when they're tired, hungry and when adults expect too much or too little.

Kids don't have experience with "right and wrong" so it's up to you to guide them.



### What to Do

- ★ Have a safe environment for children to play and explore so there aren't too many "No's" being said.
- ★ Tell child "No" calmly, and firmly, then help him or her find something else to do.
- ★ Be consistent. Don't stop it sometimes but let it go at other times.
- ★ Don't spank or harm children. Physical punishment is not the way to teach children what they can and can't do.
- ★ Don't shame or humiliate children. The child isn't bad, what they did was wrong. Praise children for doing well!
- ★ Use appropriate language and actions around your child. They will imitate what they hear and see you do.
- ★ Discipline is NOT physical punishment or withholding food or sleep.
- ★ Discipline IS stopping the inappropriate behavior and telling the child calmly, firmly and briefly what is wrong. Tell the child what's the right thing to do. Keep it short.
- ★ Children over 2 years can occasionally be removed from an activity for 1 to 2 minutes.
- ★ Children learn how to behave from patient, calm adults who act appropriately.



## ✓ Says Bad Words

Ignore it, don't laugh, don't yell. If it gets a reaction, she'll keep saying it to get your attention. You can also say in a firm but calm voice, "That is a bad word. Don't say it." She'll probably say it again to see if you react – don't.

## ✓ Bites Me or Others

Biting is part of typical development and often occurs when a child is frustrated, angry, or feels threatened such as when another child takes his toy.

Children often outgrow biting when they can express themselves with words and develop better social skills but it's important to deal with each biting incident.



### How to Prevent Biting

- ★ Don't expect him to do things he doesn't have the skill to do.
- ★ Make sure he is well rested and fed.
- ★ Don't expect toddlers to share, that's a preschool skill.
- ★ Identify his emotions. He'll learn to name his emotions and how to express his feelings.
- ★ Supervise children at play.

### When Biting Happens

- ★ Look her in the eye and firmly, calmly say, "No bite. That hurts."
- ★ Don't yell, don't bite back, spank or harm. You are a role model and she'll learn from you.
- ★ Don't lecture. Keep it short.
- ★ Be consistent. Always react firmly and calmly each time she bites.

## ☑ Cries When I Try to Leave Her with a Babysitter

Your child will go through different stages when she has a harder time being away from you. Separation anxiety is typical but it's hard on you both.



### Ways to Help Ease Separation Anxiety

- ★ Spend time with the babysitter before you leave so he can see you accept and trust this person.
- ★ Give your child a hug and a kiss.
- ★ Say, "Good-bye, I'll be back" and leave. If you know you will be back after nap or after dinner, tell the child this.
- ★ Do not say a lot of "Good-byes" and prolong leaving. It will not stop his crying sooner.
- ★ Never sneak out without saying "Good-bye." Your child will be frightened because you "disappeared."
- ★ Children learn that when a parent says "Good-bye" a "Hello" is next when you return.

## ☑ Tears Up the House

Toddlers are curious explorers. They learn by touching everything. They're always on the move so when you combine "learning by touching" and "moving" you sometimes get a "mess in the house."

### Ways to Keep Him Busy

- ★ Give him interesting toys and materials that meet his skill level to keep him engaged and from getting bored.
- ★ Let her use household items for playing dress up, and use plastic bowls, wooden spoons, and various boxes for inventive play.
- ★ Allow him to help you around the house. Wiping the table and dusting will help him feel important.
- ★ The library has many books on toddler activities and games for you and your child to learn and have fun together.

### When She Makes a Mess

- ★ Tell her to help you clean up. Be specific, say, "Put the shoe by the door, put the book back on the table."
- ★ If you say, "Clean it up" she won't be able to do it, because she doesn't have the skills to understand broad directions.



## ☑ Breaks Something in Someone Else's Home

### Toddlers Learn by Touching

They don't yet understand the difference between items that are breakable and unbreakable. Also, just like us, they love pretty things and want to see and hold it. It's safest for your child – and the "breakables" – to put them out of reach.

When at someone else's home you will need to supervise very closely. Toddlers don't always have the ability to "not touch." To prevent any accidents, ask if the items in reach could be put up while you are there.

### When Accidents Happen

If something gets broken, realize your child didn't intend to break it. Check to see if your child is hurt. Don't yell, shame or harm him. Tell him the item broke when it fell on the floor. He can hold the broom or towel while you clean it up.

Then have him re-wipe the area when it's clean so it's safe for him and he's part of the process.

Have the child with you so he can hear you apologize – you are his teacher. Don't make him say, "I'm sorry." Toddlers don't understand the meaning yet and will learn more by watching you.

## ✓ Won't Put on Clothes/Shoes

Don't chase when they run as it becomes a game. Tell her a few minutes before she has to dress what is coming up so she can transition. Let her pick out her clothes. Give her time to dress herself as much as she can. Make it fun and not a struggle. Be patient and allow enough time; rushing may make it harder.

## ✓ Throws Food All Over

Sit and talk with her while she eats. Eating is a social learning time. She will eat more and stay focused with you there. Children often throw food when they are not hungry or want your attention.

When food is thrown, tell her firmly and calmly, "Stop, food is for eating not throwing." If it continues say, "When you throw food you are telling me you are done eating." If it continues, you can remove her plate and take her out of the highchair/away from the table. She can have her plate back if she is still hungry and calm.

## ✓ Makes a Mess in Someone Else's Home

Take favorite toys, books and healthy snacks when visiting others. Toddlers get bored easily and as curious explorers and learners they will begin getting into things. Closely supervise and understand you may have to keep visits short. Have your child help you clean up if messes are made.



## ✓ Throws a Tantrum in Public



Tantrums are one way a child expresses her feelings and are part of typical development.

Tantrums are more frequent when a child is tired, bored, hungry and frustrated. So have a plan to prevent and react to the tantrums.

### Prevention Tips

- ★ Keep healthy snacks and drinks handy when away from home.
- ★ Carry along her favorite blanket or toy.
- ★ When running errands, keep them short and few. More than two errands may push the child's limits.
- ★ Talk and sing songs during car rides, waiting in line and while shopping.
- ★ Have lots of patience and be flexible. You may have to cut your trip short.

### How to React to Tantrums

- ★ Keep calm. Don't yell, threaten, shame or harm. Yelling at a child who is yelling is not teaching him not to yell.
- ★ Ignore the tantrum. This is not easy but you are showing the child that tantrums will not get him what he wants.
- ★ Don't pick up or move the child unless there is a chance she can get hurt or can hurt someone else. Picking her up can possibly cause injury to you and her.
- ★ Stay near the child to keep her safe.
- ★ Don't give in and give the child what he may be screaming for. This teaches him that tantrums work.
- ★ Stop what you are doing, take the child and leave if the tantrum persists. This is inconvenient, but it may be necessary.
- ★ Remember, all parents have experienced their child having a tantrum in public. People will not think you are a "bad" parent or your child is "bad." It's what toddlers do.



## ☑ Takes Off Clothes in Public

### Many Children Go Through This Phase

Your child will eventually outgrow this. In the meantime:

- ★ Tell her in a firm, calm voice, "Stop." Don't yell, threaten, shame or harm.
- ★ Have him help redress himself if possible.
- ★ Remember, other mothers have experienced the same "embarrassment" and know it's a phase.

## ☑ Won't Let Me Change Diaper

Some children find this a time to play, a chance to get your attention or just don't like to get their diaper changed.

Set up a routine to make diaper changes smooth.



### Do the Same Routine Over and Over

- ★ Tell your child it's time to change her diaper. If she runs away from you, don't chase, then it becomes a game. You may have to firmly and calmly repeat that it's time to change her diaper and she needs to "Come with me."
- ★ Don't ask if he wants his diaper changed. If he says, "No" you'll need to respect his answer.
- ★ Have her help get the diaper and wipes, and hold the diaper until you are ready. Children love to help.
- ★ Have him remove his pants if he can; this teaches him self-help skills.
- ★ Talk to her during the change or sing a favorite song or rhyme.
- ★ Changing a diaper is a great time to bond and help her develop language skills.
- ★ Children will know what to expect and will look forward to the fun songs, rhymes and time spent talking with you.



### When Children Kick or Squirm

- ★ If he kicks you, understand that he doesn't intend to hurt you. He is either trying to get you to play with him, or he is mad and wants to be free.
- ★ Tell him firmly and calmly to stop and lay still.
- ★ Be calm. Do not harm, yell or threaten.
- ★ Tell her to stop and that kicking hurts.
- ★ If needed, gently put your hand on her leg.
- ★ Sing, identify body parts, talk to him to redirect his behavior.

## ✓ Won't Leave a Toy or Playground When I Say It's Time to Go

Children need time to transition and to finish playing though you may not always have time for them to do this. Give them a five-minute warning and then a three-, two-, one-minute warning, so they can prepare to leave. You may have to help her put the toy down and hold her hand to walk away. Have another toy with you for her to play with so she isn't going away empty-handed.

## ✓ Cries in the Store When I Won't Buy Him Something

Involve him in the shopping trip. Have him pick a box off the shelf, put a package in the cart, look for an item on the shelf or hold an item while seated in the cart seat. He'll feel important and it will keep him from getting bored.

When he does cry because you won't buy what he wants, repeat to him calmly that, "I said no." Ignore the crying. He will eventually stop when he realizes you mean what you say. Don't give in! He will remember this on the next shopping trip and cry again.

## ✓ Runs into the Street Repeatedly

Immediately and gently get your child out of the street. Look him in the eye and tell him in a firm, calm voice, "Stop, you never run into the street." Walk the child away from the street and engage him in a new activity.

Be consistent and supervise your child at all times.



## ✓ Misbehaves in a Restaurant or Store

Children get bored quickly and have short attention spans. Keep toys and healthy snacks handy when out in public. Singing songs, talking with them about what they see and experience, and involving them in shopping will help keep their interest.

Don't yell, harm or threaten when they are misbehaving. Tell them to "Stop" and then give them something to do. They are "stuck" there so they are dependent on you to entertain them. If the misbehavior persists, you may need to leave and try again another time.

## ✓ Won't Stop Screaming

First, be sure your child isn't hurt or in pain.

Children scream when they are frustrated and don't have the words needed to express themselves. Ask a screaming toddler if they need help. Ask if they want to be held. They often need you to help calm them down. If they don't want your help, let them be, but keep in sight and within hearing range so you are there if needed. It's hard to ignore screaming, but if they know you're not going to pay attention to them, the screaming usually stops. Identify the child's and your own emotions so he can use words and not scream.



### ✓ Plays in the Sink or Toilet

Water poses an extreme hazard. Children cannot be allowed to play in water. Tell the child, "No, we don't play in the toilet (or sink)." And walk the child away and engage him in another activity. Be consistent with this rule.

### ✓ Sticks Fingers in Fan or Won't Stay Away from the Heater

Block off access to fans and heaters. Young children don't understand these dangers and can't always control their behavior. Say, "No touch" in a firm, calm voice and walk the child away. Get him interested in something else. Supervise closely and be consistent in keeping this rule of "no touch."

### ✓ Touches Things They Shouldn't

Put breakables and items children shouldn't touch out of reach. Young children are curious and learn by touching. Show them how to touch things gently.

### ✓ Thinks It's a Game When I Say "No"

Toddlers are learning what "no" means and don't have the skill to stop themselves yet. Don't say "No" too often, save it for safety issues. Redirect her to what she can do. Don't laugh or chase her, then it becomes a game.

### ✓ Hits Children or Adults

Look your child in the eye and say in a firm, calm voice, "Stop. Hitting hurts. You are not allowed to hurt our friends." Don't lecture, keep it short. If it persists, you'll need to walk her away from the interaction. Redirect her to a new activity. Be consistent and stop her each time she hits.

### ✓ Won't Stop Crying

Crying is how infants communicate, but it can be hard to determine what he's telling you.

It's also natural for young infants to cry often and for long periods. Check with your doctor about your concerns.



#### When Your Child Cries

- ★ Stay calm – which is very hard to do when the crying doesn't seem to stop.
- ★ Check your child to be sure she isn't hurt or in pain.
- ★ Check her clothing and diaper for any problems.
- ★ Ask yourself, "Is she hungry or overly tired?"
- ★ If you are calm, hold, rock and walk your child while singing and talking to her calmly.

#### When You Become Stressed, Sad or Angry About the Crying

Place your baby in his crib and step back. It's OK to step out of his room for a few minutes if he's in a safe place. Take a deep breath, call a family member or friend if you feel the need to talk to someone, or call a local agency if you feel you want to shake or hurt your baby. It is OK to ask for help. Shaking a baby can cause severe injury and death.

Once you are calm, check on your baby and try to soothe him again.

## ✓ Won't Go to Sleep/Nap

Young children need 12-13 hours of sleep including nap time.

When children are rested they tend to be happier, less grumpy, learn more easily and tend to be healthier.

### To Help Children Sleep

- ★ Set up a nap and bed time routine. Read a book, sing a quiet song, give a kiss, hug and "I love you" and lay him down. Before bed time, a bath is a good way to help your child relax.
- ★ Schedule nap and bed times appropriately for the child's age and stick to those times. Their inner clocks will become used to the times so they will naturally start to get tired.
- ★ Begin sleep time routine before the child gets tired. Overly tired children have a harder time getting to sleep.

- ★ Don't skip naps. Overly tired children can get wound up and have a hard time sleeping at night.
- ★ Don't let children stay up late, this starts a bad habit that can be hard to break.
- ★ Children naturally arouse throughout the night. Let the child try to soothe himself back to sleep for a few minutes before you intervene. Learning to put himself back to sleep is an important skill he'll use all of his life. If your child is in distress, check to be sure he is safe.



## ✓ Won't Stay Away from the Stove

Toddlers love knobs and handles and don't know which ones are safe or not. They also don't yet have the ability to control their curiosity and impulses. Tell your child "No, hot" when he reaches for the stove and gently move his hand away, repeatedly if needed. Don't punish the child for his curiosity or inability to stop himself. Use safety covers and latches, and keep pot handles turned inward so they don't hang over the edge of the stove. If the problem persists, you may need to block the kitchen off so he doesn't have access to the stove until this phase is over.



## ✓ Throws a Tantrum at Home

Tantrums are a typical, but not enjoyable, part of development.

Children throw tantrums when frustrated, tired, or hungry.

### When a Child Has a Tantrum

- ★ Be sure he's in a safe place so he can't hurt himself.
  - ★ Don't try to hold or restrain her; you and she may get hurt.
  - ★ Tell him you will talk to him when he calms down.
- ★ Ignore the behavior and walk away, though keep within sight and hearing so you can keep her safe.
  - ★ Be calm, don't yell, threaten, shame or harm. Be a role model of good behavior.
  - ★ Don't give in and give the child what she wants. This is teaching her that tantrums get her what she wants.



### ✔ Won't Share Toys

Toddlers don't have the ability to understand the concept of "sharing." Sharing is a skill they learn as a preschooler. Older toddlers can begin to learn to take turns. It's best to have enough toys and similar toys so they can play beside a friend and not have to wait. Be a role model and share with him, this is a great way for him to learn!

### ✔ Grabs Toys Away from Another Child

Tell your child, "He was playing with that. It isn't your turn." Ask if the other child wants the toy back. If so, then model correct behavior. Help your child return the toy using calm and gentle gestures. If we grab a toy from our child to give it back, we are exhibiting the same behavior we just asked him to stop. Help your child find another toy.

### ✔ Runs Ahead of Me on a Walk and Won't Stop or Come Back

Toddlers love to run, but on a walk near a road it can be dangerous. Remind her that she must walk with you. Keep her attention by talking about what you see on your walk, ask her what she sees. If she won't stay near you, she will need to hold your hand. It can be helpful to take a stroller so if she gets tired, she can rest on the walk and if she won't stay near you she must ride in the stroller.

### ✔ Plays with Matches or Other Dangerous Things

Keep all matches, lighters and other dangerous items out of reach. Young children don't understand the harm these items can do. They cannot control their behavior at this young age.

### ✔ Won't Eat

#### How to Develop Healthy Eating Habits

- ★ Be a role model. Sit and eat with your child.
- ★ Make meals a social and learning time. Talk with one another and keep the TV off. You will teach her social and self-help skills and new vocabulary words. She will tend to eat more when engaged and relaxed.
- ★ Provide and offer healthy snacks between meals at set times. Children have small stomachs and get hungry between meals. But don't let children snack all day or they won't be hungry at mealtime.
- ★ Sit your child down for snacks and drinks. Walking while eating and drinking is a safety hazard and teaches bad habits.
- ★ Offer a variety of healthy foods. It takes many opportunities of exposing children to new foods before they may try them and learn to like them.
- ★ Never force them to try new foods or eat or clean their plate.
- ★ Limit juice, sugary, fried and fast foods.
- ★ Offer a balanced meal. Talk with your doctor about what foods your child should eat as he grows.
- ★ Never use food as rewards or punishments.
- ★ Reduce food battles. No one wins when arguing over food or eating. It makes a pleasant experience unpleasant.



