

Dear parents,

As part of the project TigerKids you will receive newsletters, each one providing information concerning a certain topic. This newsletter will give you some background information about the topic "Children at the dining table" and show you some tricks how to achieve "Dining ≠ Whining". This will help you create a (more) relaxed eating situation with children for all family members. Adults and children should enjoy their meal and it should not involve whining, picking at the food and permanent reproaches.

We hope you will enjoy reading it and trying it out!



The Stiftung Kindergesundheit and the Siemens-Betriebskrankenkasse (SBK) campaign together for the early promotion of a healthy lifestyle for our children!

DINING ≠ WHINING

Children need and want a routine – even when eating!

This is achieved by both regular meals at fixed times and sitting in the same seat. In addition, rituals such as holding hands before eating and saying „Enjoy your meal!“ makes children feel comfortable.

Children need enough **time to eat**. Under time pressure, their appetite for food often diminishes or the portion gets gobbled up too fast for fear of not getting enough. You should give yourself and your children time to eat. That is a prerequisite for a pleasant meal.

Children want to be valued as their own person – just like adults!

They want to decide for themselves what they like, how much they eat and when they are full. Children should be allowed to try everything to discover the different tastes and so find out what they like. They develop preferences and aversions and these should be accepted to a certain extent. Thus it should also be accepted that sometimes children do

not like something – after they have at least tasted it.

Parents should also respect when children say that they are full. Children should not be forced to finish their meal. Normally, children know very well when they are hungry or full.

Therefore, their system should not be disturbed from outside. This could lead to children losing their natural judgement and trigger the development of overweight and eating disorders.

Children will enjoy being allowed to take part in the planning of meals and many problems will vanish into thin air. If, for example, their favourite food is offered regularly, they will accept and try other meals more readily.

Preparing food appetisingly (e.g. no overcooked stews in which the ingredients cannot be recognised) is of great importance, because **children, too, eat with their eyes first.**



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Imaginative dishes such as colourful, funny shapes, small squares or round pieces, skewers and a pretty table decoration usually work wonders. Creative surprises (such as folded pizzas) also go down well with our little ones – after all, we are all curious!

A good mood at the table creates a cosy and relaxed atmosphere that children (and also

adults) need to enjoy their meal. Quarrels, hecticness, restlessness/noise, rebukes/reproaches and conversations about unpleasant topics should be avoided. They have a negative effect on children's eating habits.

Children should **not only be given attention at the dining table.** Otherwise, they eat more and more just for the sake of attention from the parents. This behaviour will be embraced and carried into adulthood, and is then very difficult to give up.

A lot of trouble can certainly be avoided if you let your children choose how much they want to eat or initially serve only a small portion and later offer a second helping.

The motto is: consistency and patience! Otherwise, things can easily backfire. Success only comes if you **lead by positive example.**

Children are curious by nature and they like imitating adults, especially their parents, grandparents and family friends as well as their siblings. This means that they usually eat unknown food without problems if other family members also eat it. And it also means that they learn which food they prefer, it is not something they are born with. The same applies to exemplified table manners and the enjoyment of food. If children are given enough room for open conversations and mutual compromise, they automatically adopt our behaviour. However, if you try to force your behaviour onto your children without being prepared to make compromises, it is less likely that they will adopt it. This only creates a high level of stress for both children and parents and it is an obstacle to finding a solution.



Company information

Publisher & Responsible body for the programme: Prof. Dr. med. Berthold Koletzko, Leiter der Abteilung Stoffwechselkrankheiten und Ernährungsmedizin, Dr. von Haunersches Kinderspital, Klinikum der Universität München, Lindwurmstr. 4, 80337 München

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As of: 8. Auflage 2019

Gefördert im Rahmen der Gesundheitsinitiative Gesund.Leben. Bayern. des Bayerischen Staatsministeriums für Umwelt und Gesundheit
Photos: shutterstock **Illustrations:** Henk Wyniger
Layout: Cornelia Sekulin