

## NUTRITION KNOW-HOW

It is the responsibility of the caregiver to provide wholesome and nutritious food for the children under his/her care. Children are growing and changing rapidly, they expend a lot of energy. Their nutrient and energy needs must be met in order for proper growth and development to take place.

Children are generally more interested in how foods taste, look and feel than in the nutritional value. For this reason, caregivers must offer nutritional food that are attractive, with a variety of texture, color and flavor. Be sure to serve child-sized portions (about the size of the child's fist, or 1 Tbs. per year of age). Remember that children love finger foods. It is a good idea to introduce ethnic foods or foods from other cultures. This is especially true when children from other cultures attend the child care center.

Special tips for encouraging children to eat nutritious foods:

1. Children should be encouraged to try new foods, but never forced to eat everything they have been served.
2. Be aware of any food allergies or intolerance that the children may have. It may be necessary to provide special foods to some children, such as diabetics.
3. Be sensitive to the nutritional needs of all of the children.
4. Food should never be used as a punishment or as a reward.
5. Meal and snack times should be used as a time for friendly conversation, always pleasant and unhurried.
6. Remember, children enjoy being involved in food preparation and should be allowed to participate whenever possible.
7. It is important that adults model good behavior and that good manners be taught. If they hear you using "please" and "thank you", they will be more likely to use those words, also.