

# Move Well Eat Well

## Mealtime roles and responsibilities



The Division of Responsibility (DoR) is a best practice model for feeding children. Research shows that feeding in this way can support children to meet their developmental milestones and to grow into the body that is right for them<sup>1</sup>. Research has associated this way of eating and feeding with:

- a diverse diet that includes a range of foods from the five food groups<sup>2,3</sup>
- a positive and enjoyable relationship with food<sup>2</sup>
- increased self-trust and trust in others<sup>2</sup>
- better body image and self-acceptance<sup>3</sup>
- higher levels of activity<sup>2</sup>
- better sleep and longer sleep duration<sup>4</sup>
- better medical measures of health, including cholesterol and blood pressure<sup>5</sup>.

### Who does what?

The DoR considers feeding a shared responsibility and assigns specific roles to the people involved in feeding children:

- Adults decide **what food is provided**. For example, parents decide what food is packed in the lunchbox. If the child is attending an early childhood service with a menu then the service decides what is offered on these occasions.
- Adults decide **when and where children eat**. For example, parents decide that the evening meal will be eaten at the dining table. The early childhood educator decides if the children will eat outside. The early childhood service sets up a predictable but flexible routine for the day, including meal and snack times.
- Children decide **how much, in what order and whether they will eat from the foods on offer at each meal and snack**.

The DoR preserves children's ability to eat and respond to hunger and fullness cues, as parents and caregivers (including educators) respect and build a child's autonomy by removing pressure around food.

# Move Well Eat Well

## Children will eat the amount they need to grow and stay well



It can be difficult at first to trust children to know how much and what to eat from what is on offer. The amount and type of foods they eat can vary widely from meal to meal and day to day. However, when balanced out across a week or a month, children are very good at getting enough energy and nutrients to meet their needs.

Research shows that if adults provide the structure around mealtimes, children will eat the amount they need to grow and stay well <sup>2,3</sup>.

## Actions your service can take to support best practice feeding for children

Early childhood services can take a DoR approach to feeding by:

- Creating a positive, relaxed, and social mealtime environment. For example:
  - role modelling by sitting with the children and enjoying food together
  - allowing plenty of time to eat so that children don't feel rushed
  - allowing children to service and feed themselves where age appropriate.
- Taking a neutral approach when talking about food. Referring to food by its name, rather than through binary terms like good and bad or even healthy and unhealthy.
- Not commenting on how much or how little children are eating.

## Keen to learn more?

See our Nurturing Healthy Eating at Mealtimes page for more information:

[https://doh.health.tas.gov.au/mwew/early\\_childhood\\_services/plant\\_fruit\\_and\\_veg\\_in\\_your\\_lunchbox/nurturing\\_healthy\\_eating\\_at\\_mealtimes\\_in\\_the\\_early\\_childhood\\_setting](https://doh.health.tas.gov.au/mwew/early_childhood_services/plant_fruit_and_veg_in_your_lunchbox/nurturing_healthy_eating_at_mealtimes_in_the_early_childhood_setting)

To learn more about the DoR, see:

- The Ellyn Satter Institute ([www.ellynsatterinstitute.org/how-to-feed/the-division-of-responsibility-in-feeding/](http://www.ellynsatterinstitute.org/how-to-feed/the-division-of-responsibility-in-feeding/))
- Child of Mine: Feeding with Love and Good Sense by Ellyn Satter (book)
- Your Parenting Mojo: Division of Responsibility with Ellyn Satter (podcast) ([podcasts.apple.com/au/podcast/142-division-of-responsibility-with-ellyn-satter/id1148570190?i=1000532079680](http://podcasts.apple.com/au/podcast/142-division-of-responsibility-with-ellyn-satter/id1148570190?i=1000532079680))
- Food Education and Neutrality with Kelly Fullerton (podcast) ([teacherfanclub.com/kelly-fullerton](http://teacherfanclub.com/kelly-fullerton))
- Nurturing Healthy Eaters ([nuton.ca/site-files/Nurturing-Healthy-Eaters-Child-Care-FINAL-EN.pdf](http://nuton.ca/site-files/Nurturing-Healthy-Eaters-Child-Care-FINAL-EN.pdf))

<sup>1</sup> Satter EM. Feeding dynamics: Helping children to eat well. *J Pediatr Health Car.* 1995;9:178-184

<sup>2</sup> Lohse B, Satter E, Horacek T, Gebreselassie T, Oakland MJ. Measuring Eating Competence: psychometric properties and validity of the ecSatter Inventory. *J Nutr Educ Behav.* 2007;39 (suppl):S154-S166

<sup>3</sup> Satter EM. Eating competence: Definition and evidence for the Satter eating competence model. *J Nutr Educ Behav (suppl).* 2007;39:S142-S153

<sup>4</sup> Satter E. *Secrets of Feeding a Healthy Family.* 2<sup>nd</sup> Edition. United States: Kelcy Press; 2008

<sup>5</sup> Psota T, Lohse B, West S. Associations between eating competence and cardiovascular disease biomarkers. *J Nutr Educ Behav.* 2007;39 (suppl):S171-S178