

# Family Nutrition Newsletter

October 2022



## Making Room for Dessert

You might be asking yourself, **why are we advocating for dessert in a nutrition newsletter?** Simply put, all foods can fit into a healthy diet.

From October through December it seems like we (and our children) are bombarded with candy, sweets, and homemade goodies. **Learning to incorporate these special treats in a healthy way** is a far better option than trying to completely avoid them - which is almost impossible!

When we force children to eliminate or avoid foods that they naturally love - such as candy and sweets - children can very quickly begin to obsess over these foods. This can lead to long term disordered eating patterns.



There are a few simple things we can do to help them learn to incorporate these foods in a healthy way.

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1

### DESSERT IS FOR EVERYONE

If and when desserts are made available to the family, they should be **an option for everyone** and **not dependent on how much food a child has eaten**.

When a child is encouraged to eat certain foods to get dessert, they stop listening to their natural hunger cues that tell them they are full or hungry.

Consider serving dessert along with the regular meal or reminding your child to save some room for dessert so that they don't over eat.

2

### AVOID USING DESSERT AS A REWARD

When desserts are used as a reward for trying a new food or eating a helping of green beans, we might have brief success in that moment - but there are long term negative consequences to using dessert as a reward.

The child will ultimately view the forced foods as "bad" and only eat them to get their sweet reward. In the long run, they often develop a dislike for the healthy foods and an increased preference for sweets. This can lead to a diet high in added sugar and increase the risk of obesity development.

If you choose to provide dessert, serve it as a regular part of the meal and not a special reward.

3

### REMEMBER YOUR CAREGIVER ROLE

As caregivers, our main feeding roles are to:

- Decide **what foods will be served** - preferably a wide variety of healthy foods from each food group;
- Determine the **meal location** - ideally one that is free of screens and distractions; and
- Decide **when foods will be served**.

It is **the child's role to determine how much of the foods served that they will eat**. They might be tempted to fill up on dessert at first, but it will only take 1-2 bad experiences with too many sweets to help guide them towards healthy choices.

In the long run, you will be helping them develop life long eating patterns!