



## Wellness Articles

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## Encouraging kids to help in the kitchen

When the entire family gets involved in the kitchen, it can encourage connections and quality time. Kids can take part in the process, from planning meals to cleaning up. It can take extra time and effort in the beginning but it will become easier over time as kids learn skills. Being a part of planning and preparing meals teaches kids skills they can use throughout their lives.

Here are some age-appropriate tips on encouraging children to become involved in the kitchen:

Plan meals. Even very young children can assist with planning meals.

- Talk about food safety. Remind children to wash their hands often when cooking and before eating the meal. You may also want to speak about keeping cold foods cold and hot foods hot.
- Give younger children options for a meal and have them choose which one they would like to help with or eat.
- Work together to discover what ingredients you already have on hand, and what ingredients you may need to purchase.
- Have school-aged children help find items in the store.
- Older children and teens may be able to choose recipes and create shopping lists on their own. As an extra challenge, give them a budget to follow when planning the meal.

Preparing meals:

- Young children can help count ingredients, add ingredients to bowls, stir and help wash vegetables and fruit.
- School-aged children can help assemble simple dishes and measure or mix ingredients.
- Older children and teens can use basic equipment with supervision and follow recipes.
- Try meals that each member of the family can customize. Try personal pizzas, omelettes or wraps and have each person choose their own toppings and ingredients.

#### Eating:

- Have a conversation together during mealtimes. Consider sharing about your day.
- Take turns setting the table.
- Everyone can share what their favourite part of the meal was or what they did to help prepare.
- Talk about what meal you want to make next.

#### Cleaning up:

- Everyone can have a clean-up task.
- Young children can help wipe surfaces and bring their own dishes to the counter or to the dishwasher.
- School aged children can help put leftovers into containers and dirty dishes on the counter or load them into the dishwasher.
- Older children and teens can clear the table, clean dirty dishes, or put away clean dishes.