

THANKSGIVING MEAL TIPS



With a lot of people around and foods we don't see every day, the Thanksgiving meal can be overwhelming for parents and young children. Here are a few tips to help with this holiday:

Create a special bag of fun and engaging items:

Pack a small bag with your child's favorite travel size toys (even if you're at home, you want them to be portable so you can stay close to the Thanksgiving action). To maximize the motivating factor of these items, limit access before the big meal. You might consider even purchasing some new, interesting small toys.

Plan a course of action:

The most challenging times for your child will probably be (1) the time between sitting down at the table and waiting for the food to be served and (2) after your child is finished eating (and the rest of the table is still eating).

Allow your child to explore and help:

Allow your child to help out in the kitchen and give them simple tasks like stirring. Being a part of food preparation is a great way to add excitement and help children get a chance to be part of the mealtime process. It's also a great time to work on language skills!

Avoid snacks before the big meal:

The hungrier your child is, the more time they will spend at the table eating with family and friends.

Limit time between sitting down and food being served:

Be aware of the amount of time between sitting down and waiting for the food to be served. Decreasing the amount of time your child needs to wait, increases their chances of success at the table. Waiting is hard for everyone, even adults.

Serve food strategically:

If you've avoided snacks and your child is hungry, food can be a great way to keep your child occupied. Giving your child food slowly in very small portions helps extend their meal. Also, save the special dessert for the end. Put the foods you want your child to eat first on the plate and once they finish, bring out the sweets!

Limit access to preferred toys:

Give your child one toy or item at a time so that you always have backup on hand. If you give them access to all of them, they can lose their appeal. If you run out of items, you can pair a few together and show new ways to play with them.

Give your child frequent positive attention:

Make sure to positively attend to your child without placing too many demands. Ask them questions they know the answer to, praise them for sitting and playing nicely at the table, and give them opportunities to be included in the conversation.