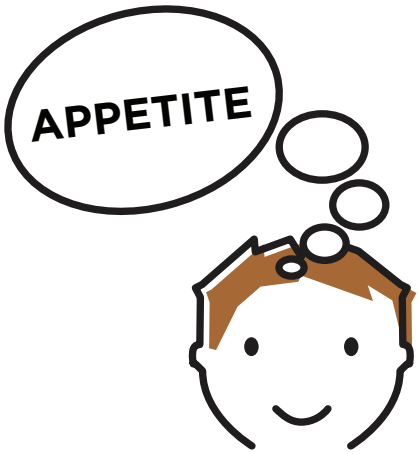
Appetite



It's all in your head!

Appetite is the desire to eat a particular food, as opposed to hunger, which is the physical need to eat (see the sheet "Hunger" for more information on this topic). In other words, hunger is in the belly and appetite is in the head!

Appetite varies. Many things influence it:

- Food preferences (↑)
- Appetizing characteristics of the meal (colours, textures, smell, etc.) (↑)
- Taste experience (↑ ou ↓)
- Health and medication (↓)
- Lack of sleep (↑)
- Meal setting (company, interactions and ambiance) (↑ ou ↓)
- Stress (↑ or ↓ depending on the person)

If a child seems to have less appetite than usual, you can speak with a school administrator to find out more about their situation.

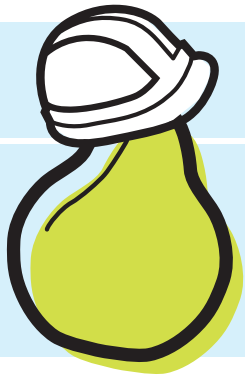
Should you say it or not?

- Don't say: "Just 2-3 more bites," or "You didn't finish your lunch, so no dessert for you."
- Say: "Listen to your hunger and enjoy!"

Food is better when it's appetizing!

Here are a few tips to make meals more appetizing:

- Focus on colours.
- Vary textures.
- Vary the contents of lunches. Eating the same thing too often can get boring (see the sheet "The Importance of Variety").
- Include foods that the child likes, but not exclusively.
- Have them help make their own lunch.



Fragile: handle with care!

Who wants to eat a bruised pear, a smashed banana or a browning apple? Some tips for children and parents: protect fragile fruit by putting it in a reusable dish or wrapping it in cloth!

Work on environment

Children's appetites are influenced by environment. Sometimes they are distracted and/or uncomfortable at mealtimes when there is too much noise or activity. This is particularly true for children who have a hard time concentrating,. We must try to create a calm environment. We can dim the lights a bit, make sure the noise level is reasonable and limit children from moving about without good reason during mealtimes. That said, keep in mind that it's important keep mealtime environments calm AND enjoyable. After all, lunchtime is fun!

Association québécoise de la garde scolaire

"Making Mealtimes More Enjoyable" is an AQGS initiative made possible through the assistance and financial support of Québec en forme

Québec en forme

Developed by Extenso
Centre de référence sur la nutrition humaine