

- Consider a restaurant that caters to families--a place where young children's noise, activity level and yes, sometimes mess, will be accepted.
- Bring a "restaurant bag," including distractions such as washable crayons, paper, a small toy or a book. Games such as "I Spy" or "20 Questions" might serve to occupy older children until the food arrives.
- Stress and the number of spills are closely related. Giving children a tippy cup, or a shortened or bendable straw, can greatly reduce spills.
- When possible, allow children to participate in ordering. Few children are able to finish a restaurant portion. Keep orders small and share items among children. A soda served before the meal seldom lasts until the meal and frequently diminishes a child's appetite.
- Hungry children are not known for their patience and don't see the time before the meal as a time for conversation and relaxation. Order soon after you arrive, or in some cases, call ahead and order in advance. Sometimes fast food or a buffet style restaurant may fit the bill for your family.
- At restaurant prices, it may work better to introduce new foods to children by offering samples from your plate rather than insisting they try something new.
- If you bring a baby bottle, note that many restaurants will not heat bottles. Holding the bottle under hot running water will usually work in a pinch.
- A few extra wet wipes come in handy for sticky hands and faces.
- More and more restaurants are providing changing tables, but it pays to come prepared with a changing pad.
- If your child's behavior becomes inappropriate and is annoying others, remove your child to a private, quiet area and let the child calm down. Offer a choice, try again, or go home.
- Restaurants are new and stimulating places for young children. Take them for a walk while waiting for your meal. Don't allow them to wander alone. When carrying trays of food, restaurant staff have a hard time seeing small children.
- Tired children rarely make it through a meal without incident. If possible, plan your activity for a time when your child is rested.
- Arrive early. Try to get the restaurant at an off-peak time. This way you can avoid long waits and crowded conditions.
- Try to sit by a window. The activity outside can provide novelty for your child while you are waiting to be served.

# Dining Out with Young Children

*Dining out with  
children is rarely an  
adult centered  
activity. Realistic  
expectations can  
help you avoid  
stressful situations.*



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Prevent Child Abuse Rhode Island is a 501 (c) (3) not-for-profit organization whose mission is to keep every child in Rhode Island safe from abuse and neglect through a primary prevention approach of education, advocacy and public awareness activities.



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