

DINING OUT

Restaurant Etiquette

- Make a reservation or use call-ahead seating if available. Always try to minimize the time your children will have to wait.
- If you have to wait, ask to look at a menu so you can order soon after you are seated.
- Choose restaurants that are kid-friendly with fast service.
- Booth seats keep kids more contained, and the baby carrier can be placed on the bench beside you.
- Don't let your child "wander" around a restaurant.
- Try going out to dinner late when the baby will be sleeping in the car seat. Ask for a highchair to turn upside down and set the seat into.
- Order food you know your children like. This isn't the time to introduce new foods, especially for picky eaters.
- Be courteous and make an attempt to clean excess food up off the floor (and if you aren't logistically able, drop a few bucks under the table for the person who has to clean it all up!).
- Tip very well if your children have made it a challenge for the wait staff, or if they have gone out of their way to make it easier for you.
- Remove children from restaurants for unruly behavior, and do not waiver – it's an effective way to teach consideration of others.

As soon as your meal is served, ask for the bill in case you have to make a quick exit or the wait staff gets busy.

Items to Bring

- Have a few ideas of games or activities you can play at the table to keep kids entertained before the food arrives, such as coloring book and crayons, a book to read, or a quiet toy that is fun to play with on a table top, such as "Wikki-stix".
- Bring wipes for hands before, during, and after meal.
- Disposable placemats that stick to the table are great! You can put food directly on the placemat and not worry about germs from the table, or glass dishes that may end up on the floor.
- Use disposable bibs or bring a bib clip (www.onestepahead.com).
- Most restaurants have only adult cutlery, so bring a small spoon and fork along.
- Using your own sippy cup will avoid spilled drinks.
- Bring your own baby food when possible, as little baby jars of food can be heated up for you.
- Know that eating in public is not a known skill – young children need plenty of practice to handle this VERY demanding task. If at first you don't succeed – keep trying. Be sure you're not expecting too much of your child – 30 minutes is a good length of time to have them sitting in public and behaving.

NOTES

