



Food Free Rewards

This information supports the following Healthy Beginnings 2-5 guideline:

- Do not use food as reward or punishment.

It is important that food is never used as a reward or punishment in your centre. Teach preschoolers to think of food as a way of giving their bodies the nutrients they need to be active, strong and healthy. They can also take pleasure in eating with friends and celebrating special events.

When food is used as a reward, it can change a preschooler's understanding of food. Instead of learning about making healthy food choices, preschoolers learn to associate foods with good behaviour or success. Not only is this confusing for young children, but it can also lead them prefer unhealthy foods and develop unhealthy eating habits.



Here are some food-free ways to reward preschoolers:



- Positive verbal reinforcement (i.e. awesome, great work)
- High fives
- Positive material reinforcement
 - Awards, certificates, stickers
- Give extra physical activity time
- Give extra free playtime
- Allow children to choose the next activity
 - Let children choose where they want to do the next activity: the playground, the field, local baseball diamond
- Let children be a special helper
- Have a treasure box that kids can select a reward from
 - Stock it with stickers, chalk, bubbles, small balls, crazy straws and other non-food items

Adapted from Feeding Preschoolers, Government of Alberta and Healthy Eating for Your Toddler, Government of Newfoundland and Labrador