Are you inviting your kids into the

Clean Plate Club?

What seems like nurturing and concern may actually be an invitation to a problematic relationship with food. Parents often equate feeding a child with love or force food onto their children because they are concerned about proper nutrition and growth.

Dangers of the Clean Plate Club

Forcing kids to overeat teaches them to ignore their bodies' signals that they've had enough. This can set them up for a lifetime of eating when not hungry.

An article published in the Journal of the Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics found that parental pressure to eat fruits and vegetables actually discourages kids from eating produce. Taking a more relaxed attitude helps children learn about their internal hunger, fullness cues and taste preferences.

Happiness at the Dinner Table

Follow these examples to promote fun and healthy meal times:

- **Divide responsibilities**. Provide a variety of nutritious foods and let your kids determine how much to eat.
- **Plan and prepare meals together.** Little kids can bring food from the refrigerator or pantry. Teens can help with slicing veggies and monitoring the stove. Everyone can request favorite vegetables, entrées and sides.
- **Lead by example.** If parents are good role models for healthy eating, kids follow suit.
- **Encourage — don't force — a taste of everything**. Cheer the family on as everyone tries each food and talks about which one they like the most.

If you worry that your child isn't consuming a proper balance of food, check in with your child's healthcare provider.

Ask for a referral to a registered dietitian nutritionist.

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Source: Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics