



Fondation  
**Olo**



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**1000**  
**jours**  
pour  
savourer  
la vie

# Feeding the Future: Helping Kids and Families Build Healthy Eating Habits

Reference Guide

# Welcome to the adventure!

## Author

**Mylène Duplessis Brochu**, PDt, MSc, Nutritionist,  
Fondation Olo

## With the collaboration of

**Caroline St-Louis**, Project Manager, Fondation Olo

**Patrick Lopez**, Communications Advisor, Fondation Olo

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**This Reference Guide is aimed at community workers and practitioners from community-based organizations such as family houses, collective kitchens, food banks, libraries and more. This practical tool is designed to provide guidance to support families in adopting healthy eating habits during pregnancy and through the child's first years of life.**

Fondation Olo offers **adapted resources and tools** to assist in **activity organization and supportive care for young families**, to help them adopt healthy eating habits early on in a child's life.

Through this guide and the other tools developed as part of its *1000 Days to Savour Life* approach, Fondation Olo gives you **clear definitions** and a **common language** relating to the behaviours to encourage in families, particularly those in a low-income situation. These messages are based on the latest recommendations on nutrition and the perinatal period.

This guide is included in the Discovery Kit given to community organizations by Fondation Olo. The kit also contains other useful tools for supporting families as well as Olo Tool Briefing Sheets to help you use the tools.

The Olo Tool Briefing Sheets are illustrated with pictograms to make it easy to match the tools with the targeted behaviours:



### Eating well



### Cooking



### Family mealtimes

## Key facts about family nutrition



4

## Working together for family nutrition



6

## What is 1000 Days to Savour Life?



8

# Key facts about family nutrition



**It's important to start promoting healthy eating habits early on in life, since these habits can have a positive impact throughout people's lives. The following data spur us to act now with little ones and their families.**

Parents are role models for their children. They're the ones who most influence their little ones' behaviours.

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**In 2017  
only 24% of adults in Quebec<sup>1</sup>  
ate enough vegetables and fruits**

- More than half the daily intake of calories in Canadian adults in 2015 came from ultra-processed foods (food with very little nutrition and usually high in fat, salt and sugar)<sup>2</sup>.
- And for Canadian aged 8 and under, the figure was 51%.

Families in uncertain economic situations often experience food insecurity because they don't have access to enough or appropriate food. Therefore, children born and raised in economically vulnerable situations are at risk of not getting the nutrition they need, which can harm their health and even their success at school.

**In Quebec,  
1 in 6 children  
is born into a situation of food  
insecurity<sup>3</sup>**

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<sup>1</sup> Brassard, D., et al. (2018). "Poor Adherence to Dietary Guidelines Among French-Speaking Adults in the Province of Quebec, Canada: The PREDISE Study.", *Canadian Journal of Cardiology*, 34(12) : 1665-1673.

<sup>2</sup> Moubarac, J.-C. (2017). Ultra-processed foods in Canada: consumption, impact on diet quality and policy implications. Montréal, TRANSNUT, University of Montreal.

<sup>3</sup> Maisonneuve, C., et al. (2014). L'insécurité alimentaire dans les ménages québécois: mise à jour et évolution de 2005 à 2012. Surveillance des habitudes de vie, Institut National de Santé Publique du Québec : 12 pages.

## In 2018<sup>4</sup>

- 500,000 Quebecers went to food banks.
- 37.8% of the households served included children.

**Parents of children aged 0–2 and in uncertain economic situations say**

**they know how to cook (97%) and enjoy it (82%),**

**but only 49% do it nearly every day (at least 6/7 days)<sup>5</sup>.**

**Financial issues (53%)** and **lack of time due to overloaded schedules (51%)<sup>5</sup>** were identified as the main obstacles to cooking. It is therefore critical to offer families support and tools so they cook more often.

**54 % of these parents say they are interested in cooking workshops.<sup>5</sup>**

Eating meals as a family also offers children a number of benefits, including food quality, good eating habits, family cohesion, school success and self-esteem. Unfortunately, the conditions that encourage eating family meals are not always present.

- In 2016, 45% of Canadians watched TV while eating dinner<sup>6</sup>; however, it is recommended to avoid sources of distraction during meals.

Given the importance of a healthy diet from the time of conception and throughout early childhood, and given the obstacles that financial instability can create, you, as a community organization, have a uniquely influential role to play in helping families acquire healthy eating habits when children are still young.

An expectant mother who eats well has better chances of giving birth to a healthy baby. And, there are more chances that a baby born to parents with healthy eating habits will also develop healthy eating habits. This is why Fondation Olo developed *1000 Days to Savour Life*, to help mothers—and their whole family—develop healthy eating habits starting in pregnancy.

<sup>4</sup> Gauvin, A., et al. (2019). *Bilan-faim Québec 2018*, Les Banques alimentaires du Québec.

<sup>5</sup> Léger survey (2019). L'alimentation dans les familles québécoises - Sondage Web à travers le Québec, Québec en Forme.

<sup>6</sup> Léger Marketing survey (2016). Le grand sondage RICARDO. Consulted at [http://ici.radio-canada.ca/emissions/bien\\_dans\\_son\\_assiette/2015-2016/chronique.asp?idChronique=400468](http://ici.radio-canada.ca/emissions/bien_dans_son_assiette/2015-2016/chronique.asp?idChronique=400468) on June 1, 2019.

# Working together for family nutrition



**A child's first years of life are critical to their development. A child experiences the most extensive and rapid development of their life during the perinatal period. Dietary deficiencies or exposure to great stress can have significant repercussions on a child's health.**

Therefore, the perinatal period is a unique opportunity to foster children's health. Furthermore, the arrival of a child is the perfect time for parents to review their eating habits and to make positive changes for the health of their family.

Fondation Olo's mission is to give an equal chance to all families to bring a healthy baby into the world and introduce healthy eating habits early on in life.

## How?

By helping families, especially those in low-income situations, to adopt healthy eating habits during the first 1000 days of a child's life.

## Why collaborate with Fondation Olo?

**To encourage better eating habits for families over the short and long terms**

**Working together, we can:**

Reach more families



**Support them better in acquiring healthy eating habits**



**Pool our complementary areas of expertise, along with those of our partners**

# How do communities benefit?

Fondation Olo wants to support you, so you will feel more comfortable addressing healthy eating with pregnant women, families and young children. Working with us will allow you to:

- Hone your knowledges**  
about nutrition in the perinatal period, particularly for vulnerable families
- Implement or strengthen**  
activities linked to healthy eating
- Expand your network**  
of professionals, practitioners and community workers who work with families and young children

We want to work with you to create linkages between the actors helping families acquire healthy eating habits. In this way, we want to develop a continuum of family services in Quebec.

## Linkages with the health network

Since its early days, Fondation Olo has supported pregnant women living in poverty in order to reduce the number of births of low-birth-weight babies, thanks to follow-up care in the health and social services network (CLSC). During nutritional follow-up care, Olo practitioners support expectant mothers and offer them food and prenatal vitamin supplements.

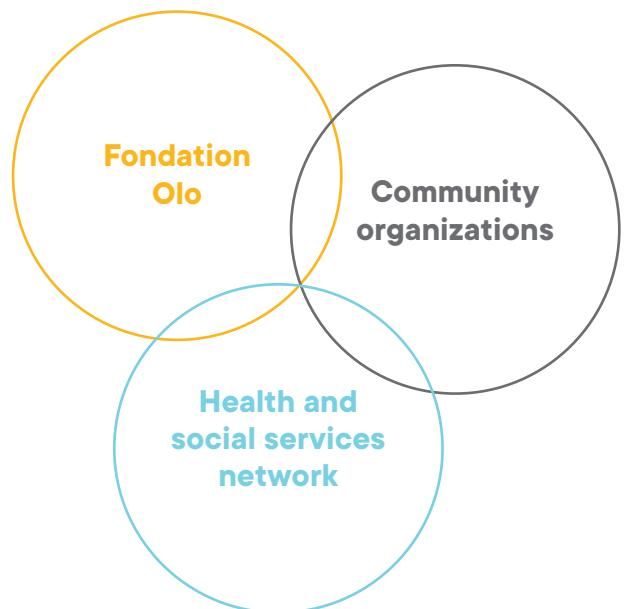
As a result of the broadening of Olo's mission and our desire to support more families and for a longer period of children's lives, we now offer several resources to promote healthy eating behaviours. And we are continuously optimizing the consistency of our messages and the complementarity of the work done with families in need.

### Many actors can play an important role in helping families acquire healthy eating habits.

Collaboration between your organization and workers in the health and social services network can be very advantageous for families.

In fact, this collaboration will make it possible to reach **more families in the greatest need**, and enrich the support already provided by CLSCs.

At the same time, an expectant mother who has developed a trusting relationship with her practitioner at the CLSC will be more willing to take part in a cooking workshop in a community organization if her practitioner encourages her to do so.



# What is **1000 Days to Savour Life?**



**1000 Days to Savour Life** is part of Fondation Olo's expanded mission, which now focuses on eating behaviours, the perinatal period, families and the community.

## **1000 days = pregnancy + 2 years**

*1000 Days to Savour Life* brings together workers in the health and social services network and community workers, to strengthen nutritional habits with families.

Thanks to their complementary missions and actions, the activities offered by CISSS/CIUSSS and community organizations respond to the many varied needs of families, particularly in a low-income situation.

**1000 Days to  
Savour Life is built on:**

**3 keystones  
3 behaviours**

### **3 keystones**

The Fondation Olo approach arises at the intersection of three areas of expertise: **perinatology, healthy eating** and **support for families in vulnerable situations**.

These three areas of expertise have led to the three following keystones:

**Act early**



to foster the adoption of healthy eating habits

**Promote**



these habits in young children one bite at a time

**Empower**



parents to act

## **Act early to foster the adoption of healthy eating habits**

Healthy eating is learned early on. The actions parents take at mealtimes, every day, have an enormous impact on babies' eating habits and health—present and future. Even when babies do not yet eat the same food as the rest of the family, they are already developing food habits, preferences and standards.

Food and eating habits during pregnancy and in children's early years have an impact on their health as well as their emotional, physical, motor, social, cognitive and linguistic development. Throughout the perinatal period, children experience the most extensive and rapid development of their life. Positive influences, like access to healthy foods and appropriate mealtime behaviours by the parents, must be encouraged so children can live in conditions that foster their development.

## **Promote these habits in young children one bite at a time**

To encourage families to improve their eating habits, it's important to take their reality into consideration and to support them, step by step, in changing their behaviour, by developing their knowledge and their cooking skills.

Healthy eating is a concept that varies in each situation. Every family, every individual, is driven by their own reality and experiences.

It is best to use a non-directive approach to support families, because it helps create trust, openness to learning and the gradual incorporation of change. When, on the other hand, families are introduced to a large number of changes to be made all at once, or changes that don't seem to them a priority, or even realistic, it is very likely that they will lose interest.

## **Empower parents to act...**

Empowering parents means promoting their ability to take action, and to have greater control over their own lives and in reaching the goals they consider important. Encouraging the development of knowledge and skills in parents will make them feel more powerful and confident in their ability to cook nutritious food.

Becoming aware of their own power to act is important because parents are the main influence on young children's nutrition and their acquisition of healthy eating habits. Here are a few examples of where parents have influence:

- Exposing children to different foods and flavours
- Making foods accessible and available
- Acting as role models
- Setting the context of family meals
- Adopting practices and strategies at mealtimes

It is beneficial to first introduce families to all the elements involved in healthy eating, rather than targeting specific recommendations too quickly. By presenting all the components involved in healthy eating, families can better identify the positive behaviours they've already adopted and those they can improve. It then becomes easier for them to take action based on their own reality. This type of intervention is completely in line with a parental empowerment approach.

### **...particularly in economically uncertain circumstances**

Parents experiencing food insecurity report feeling they have to choose between food quantity and quality. Despite a desire to choose healthy, low-cost foods, they are afraid they won't be able to prepare them properly and that they will go to waste—a loss of precious financial resources. Thus, ultra-processed foods, which are high in fat, salt and sugar, find their way into their shopping carts, since they are high in calories, low in price and parents believe they won't end up in the trash. Discovering new foods or recipes in the right framework that's not financially threatening is a winning condition to help these families strengthen their power over their food expenses.

Where financial resources are limited, the key to developing healthy nutrition lies in acquiring basic cooking skills to prepare foods and optimize resources. Unfortunately, many financially insecure families are doubly penalized: by their limited budget and by the fact that cooking skills are being passed down less. However, these skills are necessary to eat well on a budget.



## Eating well



## Cooking



## Family mealtimes

# 3 healthy eating behaviours

## Fondation Olo's vision of healthy eating

**Healthy eating means enjoying a variety of quality foods by taking the time to prepare, eat and share meals.**

**Healthy eating involves not only the foods eaten but also the eating-related behaviours.**

**Underpinning this vision are two undeniable truths: First, healthy eating early on in life fosters equal opportunities for a healthy life. Second, healthy eating is a sizeable challenge for financially insecure families. This is why offering these families support is so critical.**

To foster the acquisition of healthy eating habits in young families, three behaviours have been deemed especially important: *Eating well*, *Cooking* and having *Family mealtimes*. These three simple, tangible behaviours foster child development at the emotional, physical, motor, social, moral, cognitive and linguistic levels while contributing to food security.

Fondation Olo offers definitions of these three behaviours to ensure a common understanding of their key messages and to guide the support offered to families around these behaviours.

The definitions represent the ideal situation of each behaviour. Within a context of changing habits, it is clear that not all families will be able to adopt all the components of the targeted behaviours at once. Support must therefore be adapted to the reality and the needs of the families, using a one-small-step-at-a-time approach.



## Eating well

You'll find more information on the  
**Eating Well**  
behaviour in the  
Olo Tool Briefing Sheets  
that include the above pictogram.

**Having a balanced diet by eating a variety of nutritious food, in sufficient quantities to meet one's needs.**

- Having a balanced diet from the points of view of quantity and quality.
- Eating a variety of foods.
- Respecting our body's hunger and fullness cues.

**All foods have a place in a healthy diet. There are no good or bad foods. There is a range of foods to be eaten daily, occasionally or rarely, according to their nutritional value.** Diet can't be evaluated on the basis of a single meal or a single day. Every day, we must choose simpler foods: foods that are raw or are as unprocessed as possible. It is still possible, once in a while, to opt for foods containing more fat or sugar (ultra-processed), either to save time or for pleasure. But it would not be recommended to eat them daily.

The meaning of eating well varies greatly over the course of a human being's first 1000 days of life, starting with the mother's diet during pregnancy, then through breastfeeding, then in the first foods, and finally by joining in at family meals.

Starting in pregnancy, the mother's good nutrition and weight gain in line with the recommendations will help the fetus develop well. These babies will be less at risk of having developmental and health problems in their early years. After birth, breastfeeding plays an important role in children's physical, cognitive, motor and emotional development. It also offers protection against infections and prevents obesity in childhood and adolescence. What's more, when breastfeeding goes well, it is associated with better postpartum recovery for the mother, stronger maternal attachment and reductions in stress and negative moods.

Generally, a sufficient quantity of healthy foods from early childhood, and then throughout life, promotes health and reduces the risks of weight problems, diabetes, cardiovascular disease and more.



## Preparing a meal from simpler foods on a budget.

- Preparing meals and snacks from fresh, frozen or canned basic ingredients.
- Teaching children from a very young age to observe, handle and prepare food.
- Optimizing our budget by planning meals based on reduced-price foods and leftovers or surpluses.

## Cooking

You'll find more information on the **Cooking** behaviour in the Olo Tool Briefing Sheets that include the above pictogram.

**Cooking includes all handling involved in preparing foods, like cutting, mixing, assembling and heating.** By preparing dishes designed especially for their family, parents look after their family's health and well-being. Cooking not only makes it possible to eat more nutritious foods, it also helps reduce food expenses. In fact, buying commercially prepared meals inflates the grocery bill.

Planning menus helps save money by making sure leftovers are eaten, by buying products that are priced-reduced and avoiding impulse buying. That way, less food is forgotten in the refrigerator, which means that less food is wasted, and therefore, less money lost. Planning menus is also associated with healthier eating and more frequent family meals.

Exposing even very young children to food preparation and cooking, and getting them to participate is a wonderful gift to give them. They'll have more chances to develop an interest in meal preparation while expanding their cooking skills. This will give them a better foundation for their adult life.

Gaining cooking skills helps people make better food choices. Preparing dishes from basic ingredients (fresh, frozen or canned) promotes healthy eating, because these dishes will often contain less sugar, salt and fat. In children aged 2–5, meal preparation leads to a higher intake of vegetables and a lower intake of ready-to-eat foods.



## Family mealtimes

You'll find more information on the **Family mealtimes** behaviour in the Olo Tool Briefing Sheets that include the above pictogram.

**Sharing some pleasant time during which family members gather together in a space dedicated to eating a meal and act as role models for the child.**

- Adopting a consistent mealtime schedule.
- Making mealtimes a special time for positive interactions between family members, without conflict, pressure or distractions (TV, cellphones, toys or other).
- Acting as a nutritional role model (eating the same foods as the child).
- Choosing an appropriate place to eat.

**Family mealtimes should be a recurring event, during which the family shares some pleasant time around a meal. This involves much more than just eating together.**

It includes the whole context in which eating takes place, the mealtime routine, the place where food is eaten, the distraction-free atmosphere, and the parents' presence and behaviour. All of these contribute to making mealtimes enjoyable and to developing a healthy relationship with food.

Eating meals as a family promotes a healthy and balanced diet while increasing the intake of fruits, vegetables and whole grains. Family meals are also associated with less use of ready-to-eat foods, fried foods, sweet drinks, and fatty foods.

Family mealtimes leads to more appropriate life and dietary behaviours, including eating breakfast more frequently and having a reduced risk of food disorders and drug and alcohol problems, while also lowering the risk of being overweight or obese.

Family meals promote family bonds while fostering better relationships between family members. This strengthens the feeling of belonging, bolstering family values and decreasing stress and tension. In this way, family meals improve several areas of children's development: emotional, physical, motor, social, moral, cognitive and linguistic.