

Food as a Reward

Using sugary and salty foods as a way to reward good behaviour (i.e. getting dessert for eating veggies or a candy for completing homework, etc.) can be confusing for children and youth who are learning about healthy eating at home and school.

Rewarding with food can lead to unhealthy habits such as:

- developing a **preference for less healthy foods** over more nutritious ones.
- **expecting to be rewarded** for doing good things instead of learning to do it on their own.
- eating when not hungry and using food to make them feel good—leading to an **unhealthy relationship with food**.

To help children stay healthy, find other ways to celebrate good work and behaviour with the goal to reward less and less. Then they can learn to do tasks on their own and enjoy the feeling of a job well done.



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Try some of these ideas:

At home

- Compliment and thank them
- Play a game, read, do a craft or puzzle together
- Go to the library, park or for a bike ride together
- Let them choose a new pencil or colouring book
- Let them have time with friends
- Encourage them to enjoy their feeling of accomplishment and thank those who helped them

At school

- Give compliments, high fives or thank-you cards
- Send an email or phone home to let the family know how well the students have done
- Do a craft or go outside for a fun activity
- Let them choose where to sit or be the helper
- Let them choose a low-cost item such as pens, erasers or stickers
- Play music while students work
- Extend recess time
- Share this information with others!

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