

A Walk Upstream

"The woman did what any decent person would do – she threw off her shoes and dove into the water to rescue the child."

Tips for dining out with young children

- Consider a restaurant that caters to families. Young children's noise, activity level and, sometimes, mess will be more expected and accepted.
- Bring a "restaurant bag," including distractions such as washable crayons, paper, a small toy or a book. Games, such as "I Spy" or "20 Questions," might occupy older children until food arrives.
- Give children a sippy cup or a shortened or bendable straw to reduce spills. Remember, stress and the number of spills are closely related.
- Order soon after you arrive. In some cases, call ahead, and order in advance. Hungry children are not known for their patience and don't see the time before the meal as a time for conversation and relaxation. Sometimes, fast food or a buffet-style restaurant may fit the bill for your family.
- When possible, allow children to participate in ordering. Few children are able to finish a restaurant portion. Keep orders small, and share items among children. Drinks served before the meal seldom last until the meal and frequently diminish a child's appetite.
- Introduce children to new foods by offering samples from your plate rather than ordering them something new.
- Note that many restaurants will not heat bottles. Holding the bottle under hot running water will usually work in a pinch.
- More and more restaurants are providing changing tables, but it pays to come prepared with a changing pad.
- A few extra wet wipes come in handy for sticky hands and faces.
- If your child's behavior becomes inappropriate and is annoying others, take the child to a private, quiet area to calm down. Offer a choice: try again or go home.
- Restaurants are new and stimulating places for young children. Take them for a walk while waiting for your meal. Don't allow them to wander alone. When carrying trays of food, restaurant staff members have a hard time seeing small children.
- Tired children rarely make it through a meal without incident. If possible, plan your activity for a time when your child is rested.

