Healthy Tips for Picky Eaters
How to explore new foods with preschoolers

Do any of the statements below remind you of your mealtime with kids?

“How many peas do I need to eat to get a cookie?”

“Ew. I don’t want to try that.”

“Is there anything else to eat?”

Because you want your child to grow healthy and strong, your child’s picky eating can be cause for concern. Studies show that most children do not consume the recommended amount of fruits and vegetables, and picky eaters tend to shy away from vegetables, so that concern is understandable. Fortunately for most parents, a child’s picky eating is temporary. If you don’t make it a big deal, it will usually end before school age. Try the following tips to help deal with your child’s picky eating behavior in a positive way. Check the ones that work for you and your child.

- Get Creative
- Enjoy Mealtime Together
- Lead by Example
- Stock Up on Healthy Choices
- Limit Junk Food in Your Home
- Try New Foods
- Make Healthy Food Fun to Eat
- Let Kids Help with Meals and Snacks
Get Creative
Add fruits and veggies to foods they already like
Mix blueberries and oats into pancakes
Add sliced fruit to your child’s favorite cereal
Serve shredded veggies over rice or whole wheat pasta
Make smoothies with fresh or frozen strawberries, a banana, and low-fat yogurt

Enjoy Each Other While Eating Family Meals Together
Talk about fun and happy things. If meals are times for family arguments, your child may learn unhealthy attitudes toward food.

Lead by Example
Be a good role model. As a parent, you are your child’s most important role model - especially when it comes to making healthy choices. They learn by watching you!
Eat with your child. If you eat healthy and try new foods, your child will, too.

Stock Up on Healthy Choices
Buy healthy fruits, veggies, whole grains, and low-fat dairy products.
Keep healthy foods where they’re easy for your kids to see.

Limit “Junk Food” in Your Home
Limit the number of foods high in fat and added sugar that you bring into your home.

REFERENCES


This material created for the Healthy Kids Resource Center University of Nevada Cooperative Extension
**Try New Foods**

Forcing your child to eat certain foods will only cause stress for you and your child.

Serve a few fruits and veggies at mealtimes. Offer choices, For example, "Would you like broccoli or cauliflower for dinner?"

Let your kids try small portions of new foods that you enjoy. Give them a small taste at first and be patient with them. When they develop a taste for more types of foods, it’s easier to plan family meals.

Give options for snacks, suggest snap peas, sliced bell peppers, cucumbers, kiwi, or blueberries.

Offer only one new food at a time. Serve something that you know your child likes along with the new food. Offering more new foods all at once could be too much for your child.

Offer new foods many times. Sometimes, new foods take time. Kids don’t always take to new foods right away. It may take several tries for a child to accept a new food.

Serve the same foods for the whole family. Avoid being a “short-order cook,” making a different meal for your child.

**Make Healthy Food Fun to Eat**

Cut baked chicken, low-fat cheese, and veggies into bite-size pieces. Let kids “dip” these pieces into dunking sauces. Try hummus, low-fat ranch dressing, salsa, ketchup, or mustard.

Cut food into fun and easy shapes with cookie cutters. Give your kids the ingredients to “build” their own healthy salad, taco, or pizza. Name the food after your child, eg. “Susan’s Specialty Salad”.

**Let Kids Help with Meals and Snacks**

Have your kids prepare meals and snacks with you. Children are more likely to eat food that they help make!

Let them help:

- Make the shopping list
- Pick out food at the grocery store
- Wash produce,
- Slice, mix, bake, or cook food (as age appropriate)

**REFERENCES**


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