



Healthy Tips for Picky Eaters

How to explore new foods with preschoolers

By Calvillo Buffington, Aurora and Lindsay, Anne

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 eat 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, children's picky eating is temporary. If you don't make it a big deal, it will usually end before they reach school age. Try the tips on the following pages 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.



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Lead by Example

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!

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.

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, say "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, suggesting 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 over several mealtimes. 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, such as "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 the produce.
- ✓ Slice, mix, bake or cook food (as age appropriate)

REFERENCES

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