

Fun Food

Children are especially open to trying new foods arranged in creative ways. Make the foods look irresistible to them with fun arrangements, colors, and shapes. Kids also like finger foods and those involving dips.

Variety

Help children explore new flavors and textures in food. Offer healthy foods and proteins at least twice a week. Try adding different herbs and spices to simple meals to enhance the taste for your child. Only offer new foods in small amounts and wait at least one to two weeks before reintroducing the same food.

Keep Trying

Even if your child refuses a food once, keep trying. It can take as many as 10 times or more tasting a food before your child accepts it. Scheduled meals and limiting snacks can help ensure they are hungry when a new food is introduced. Repeatedly showing them what foods you want them to eat is very important. If you never serve it, they will never eat it.



Child Chefs

Kids love to have fun with food. With supervision, some cooking tasks are great for toddlers (painting on cooking oil, stirring, counting ingredients, washing foods, cutting foods into a new shape, etc). Involving children in the process of making food can make it fun for them and open them up to trying new foods. Don't be afraid to set boundaries if your toddler starts to throw food and make a mess.

Meal Plan

Toddlers like to exercise control, put it to good use with eating. When shopping, include your child in meal planning. Allow them to pick out fruits and vegetables to make for dinner. Read kid-friendly cookbooks together.

When to Call

Please contact the office if you have concerns related to weight gain and growth, nutrient deficiencies, or any other further questions.

Resources

Kidseatincolor.org

This site offers a bounty of picky eating resources, like above, along with toddler eating schedules, picky eater guides, online courses, and much more

Healthychildren.org

The Picky Eater Project by Natalie D. Muth and Sally Sampson



Picky Eaters

Recommendations and tips for parents to help solve picky eating



Child Health Associates
childhealthassociates.net
(508) 832-9691 & (508) 842-1500

Picky Eating

During infancy, children experience rapid growth where they can triple in weight. Once they reach the toddler stage, their growth rate and appetite begin to slow down. During this stage, they also begin to develop their own food preferences where their favorite one day is disliked the next. Picky eating is a typical behavior and in time will even out.

Fights & Food

If your child refuses a meal, try not to stress or fuss over it. It is your job to provide food, and the child's decision to eat it. It is good for them to learn to listen to their bodies and use hunger as a guide. Pressuring kids to eat, or punishments for not eating, can make children dislike foods they may otherwise enjoy.

Try offering "no pressure" meals - when a meal is ready, let the child decide how much to eat, if at all. Giving the choice helps them learn to like more foods over time.

This is not easy to do and may feel uncomfortable but it will get easier. The goal is to create a pleasant and inviting eating environment where they can learn to like new foods.

Bridging Foods

Once a new food is accepted, introduce others with a similar color, flavor, and texture/ This helps expand the variety in what your child will eat. For example, if mashed bananas are liked, try mashed potatoes or cauliflower.

Family Style

Share a meal together as a family as often as you can without digital distractions like TV, tablets or cellphones. Serve one meal for the entire family and avoid making another meal if your child refuses to eat what is served as this encourages picky eating. Be sure to include at least one food your child likes in the meal and continue to provide these balanced meals whether they eat it or not. Try saying "you can eat when you are ready". Forcing them to eat a certain amount of food can make them more picky. Encourage the meal to be eaten sitting down, this allows them to slow down, listen to their bodies, and eat better. Have the child sit at the table for an age-appropriate amount of time and then let them get down - sometimes they aren't hungry and that's okay.

Pressure Phrases to Avoid

"Just try one more bite"

"You can have dessert when you have tried this food"

"If you don't eat it, you cannot play after dinner"

Avoid Bribes

Although tempting to bribe your child with treats and rewards for eating other foods can be tempting, it should be avoided. This can make 'prize' food likes desserts more exciting and the foods you want them to eat an unpleasant chore.

Try serving dessert with dinner, it will make the foods appear equal or try serving it with other foods during snack time or other meals.

Dessert shouldn't be tied to eating a certain amount of a meal.

Kitchen Hours

It is easy for children to graze on food all day but for picky eaters this can backfire as they are less likely to feel hunger are are less willing to try new foods.

Open the kitchen at certain times and close it when meals and snacks are over. Kids need roughly 3 meals and 0-3 snacks per day, try serving these on a routine every 2-4 hours to improve picky eating.

Educate

Teach children what food does for their bodies. Labeling foods as 'good' or 'bad' for them doesn't make them more willing to try new foods and can make them more picky. Try presenting food facts like how carrots help our eyes see in the low-light.

Pairing Foods

Try serving unfamiliar or new foods your child tends to dislike with familiar foods. Pairing bitter or sour foods with sweet and salty foods can be a good combination for toddler taste buds. This helps them associate these foods and can decrease pickiness with the new food.

Modeling

Children learn by watching you. Model the same behaviors listed in front of your child. Let them see you try new foods, eat together, use neutral language when talking about sweets, and play with your own food to engage them in theirs.

If there is a food you don't enjoy, try this in front of your child and let them know you are learning to like new foods too.