

ABCs OF Growing Healthy KIDS:



PICKY EATERS

IS YOUR CHILD A PICKY EATER?

Does your child refuse green foods? Does he or she suddenly react to an all-time favorite food with “I don’t like this” or, simply, “No!”? Are you concerned because your child will not eat vegetables?

The preschool years are characterized by bouts of asserting independence. What appears to be “picky” eating may instead be your child’s early attempts to be assertive—a natural part of growing up. Before a picky eater gets to be a problem eater, you can use certain skills and techniques to ease mealtime struggles and encourage even the pickiest eater to try a few bites of new, different, nutritious food at each meal.

Many sources are available to help parents and caregivers cope with the young, opinionated eater, but no one answer will work all the time. Arm yourself with these tips for handling what may appear to be the “downs and ups” of child feeding.

TRY ONE, TWO, OR A FEW OF THE FOLLOWING TIPS WITH A PICKY EATER YOU KNOW!

1. ONE STEP AT A TIME.

Offer just one new food at a time. Let the child know if it will be sweet, salty, or sour. Serve it with other foods you know your child likes.

2. A TASTE IS JUST A TASTE.

Let your child decide the amount to try. A “taste” can be as small as half a teaspoon but don't force it.

3. WHAT GOES IN, MAY COME OUT... AND THAT'S OKAY!

Recent studies indicate young children are more likely to try a new food if they have the option of not swallowing it. Show children how to carefully spit the food into a napkin, if they decide they don't want to swallow it.





4. IF AT FIRST YOU DON'T SUCCEED... TRY AGAIN.

Many young children must be offered a food ten to fifteen times before they will accept it, according to recent research. Continue to offer a new food; don't give up. Eventually children are likely to give it a try.

5. BE A ROLE MODEL.

Imitation is a powerful force in learning. If you want children to be willing to try new foods, it is helpful for them to see you eating those foods, too.

6. CAPITALIZE ON "FOOD-TASTING" PEERS.

To encourage a reluctant taster, have him or her sit with friends or siblings who are good tasters when you introduce a new food.

7. AVOID THE "SHORT-ORDER COOK" ROUTINE.

Serve an unfamiliar food with familiar ones. This increases the likelihood a child will taste the new food. But expect your child to eat the same foods as the rest of your family.

8. COLOR AND TEXTURE MAKE A DIFFERENCE.

Most children prefer bright colors and interesting textures. Many prefer plain foods they can easily recognize.

9. GET CHILDREN INVOLVED.

Even the most finicky eater is more likely to try a food he or she has helped prepare.

10. REMEMBER MEAL PLANNING AND GROCERY SHOPPING.

Whenever possible, include your child in planning, shopping for, and preparing some meals. This sense of ownership may stimulate interest and curiosity, and could help "sell" that first bite.

11. YOU CAN LEAD THEM TO A NEW FOOD... BUT YOU CAN'T MAKE THEM EAT.

Never force a child to try a food. Offer it, but if it is not eaten, simply take the food away and present it again at a different time.

12. READ STORIES ABOUT FOOD TO AND WITH YOUR CHILDREN.

A child may be more likely to try a food that was introduced in a story.

13. MOST OF ALL, RELAX!

Focus your attention on the positive aspects of your child's eating behavior, not on your child's food.

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