

Mealtime with a Picky Eater

Picky eating is common. Picky eating can start at any age, but it is most common in toddlers. Almost half of children are picky eaters at some point. This becomes a worry when it gets in the way of a healthy diet, causes unhealthy weight changes, or upsets family meals and social situations.

What does it mean to be a Picky Eater?

- Eats less than 10 total foods regularly
- Does not eat any foods of a certain kind (fruit, vegetables, meat)
- Will not try any new foods



Tips for feeding your picky eater

Start small with new food goals.

- It is okay to start slowly. A first step may be to try a different brand of a favorite food. Praise your child for trying even the smallest bites.
- Pair a familiar taste with the new taste. If your child likes strawberries, try dipping them in a new yogurt!

Try new foods when kids are hungry.

- Try new foods first. Offer them at the start of a meal or snack. Your child can have a bite of a “favorite” food next, but always try the new food first.
- Trying new foods at mealtimes can be stressful. It may be easier to try new foods at snack time.

Model trying new foods.

- Sit down and eat new foods with your child.
- Your child may be nervous or scared to try a new food. Seeing you eat the food shows them the food is safe.
- Remind other family members to support the child. If a sibling is always poking fun, it can be hard for your child to make progress.

Try new foods again and again.

- Children may need to try foods over 20 times before they accept the food.
- Ask questions like...

What does it feel like?

What colors do you see?

Does it look like anything else you've had?

What do you smell?

- Don't worry if your child spits out a food. They may be learning about a new texture or taste. This doesn't always mean that your child doesn't like the food.
- Place new foods on the table. Placing new foods on the table and seeing others eat it introduces a child to food.

Make trying new foods part of your typical daily routine.

- Set a goal to try a bite of what the family is having at every meal and snack. Your child will be more open to eating new foods when it is a normal part of his/her day.
- Offer rewards for good efforts. Every time your child tries a new food give them a sticker. Set a number of stickers that earns a special prize, like a trip to the zoo, a small toy, or a trip to a special park.
 - Always follow through with rewards you promise and don't give them the reward unless they earn it.

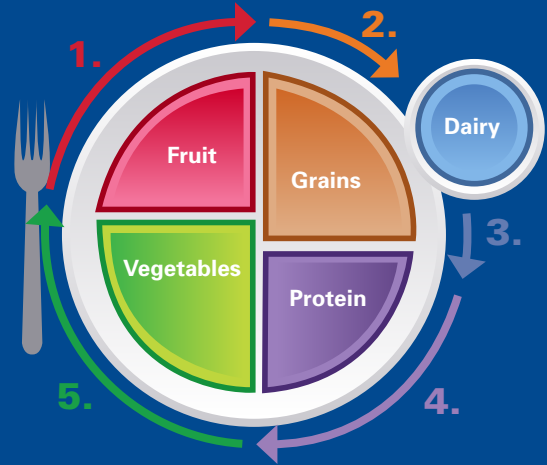


Remember, your child is learning to eat, just like they are learning many other skills.

Be patient - it will get better!

Try this!

Try "eating around the plate." Take a single bite of each food on the plate before repeating a food.



Remember when you first start to try new food, they may get upset.

- This might include crying, screaming, or gagging.
- Teach polite tasting. Show the child how to spit out food in a napkin. The child will feel better about trying new foods if they know there is a way out.
- Your child may demand sweet treats and snacks instead of other foods you are offering. Stick to your planned healthy foods.
- Your child may try to sneak unhealthy snacks. Try removing those foods from your home for a while.
- Talk to your primary care doctor if your child still will not try new foods after you have tried these ideas for a few weeks.