

Picky Eating: Problem Solved!

It is common for children to be picky. Continuing to offer new foods, especially healthy ones, will help them eat a variety of foods throughout their lives. Here's what you can do help your child eat different foods:

• Know if Your Child is Picky:

| Common Behavior for Kids: | Picky Eating Behavior: |
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| Eating a food one day and refusing it the next. | Always denying food that is not their favorite. |
| Eating only small amounts at times. | Becoming unhappy when he/she is offered new food. |
| Taking a bite of a new food and then taking it out of his/her mouth. | Complaining or crying at the table. |
| Trying a new food only after seeing it many times. | Parents are worried about the child being able to eat away from home. |

• Split the Responsibility:

Child's Responsibilities:

- ◆ How much, if any, to take
- ◆ What of the foods offered they will eat

Caregiver's Responsibilities:

- ◆ What is offered—choose healthy foods
- ◆ When it's offered—regularly schedule meals and snacks



• Help Your Child Behave at the Table:

Make meal-time pleasant, but don't be a short-order cook. Try not to cater to your child's picky eating.

Make time at the table enjoyable—include your child in the conversation.

Help your child be polite—teach them to say “yes, please” and “no, thank you.”

• Allow Children to Help at Mealtime:

At 2 years:

- Wipe down tables
- Throw things in the trash
- Tear up lettuce
- Rinse fruits and vegetables
- Hand items to adult to put away after shopping

At 3 years:

- Stir pancake batter
- Knead dough
- Put toppings on pizza
- Add ingredients
- Squeeze citrus fruits
- Name and count foods

At 4 years:

- Peel foods like oranges, bananas, and eggs
- Set the table
- Help measure dry ingredients
- Help make sandwiches and tossed salads



Phrases that *HELP* and *HINDER*



As the caregiver, you play the biggest role in your child's eating behavior. What you say has an impact on developing healthy eating habits. Negative phrases can easily be changed into positive, helpful ones!

Phrases that *HINDER*

INSTEAD OF ...

Eat that for me.
If you do not eat one more bite, I will be mad.

Phrases like these teach your child to eat for your approval and love. This can lead your child to have unhealthy behaviors, attitudes, and beliefs about food and about themselves.

INSTEAD OF ...

You're such a big girl; you finished all your peas.
Jenny, look at your sister. She ate all of her bananas.
You have to take one more bite before you leave the table.

Phrases like these teach your child to ignore fullness. It is better for kids to stop eating when full or satisfied than when all of the food has been eaten.

INSTEAD OF ...

See, that didn't taste so bad, did it?

This implies to your child that he or she was wrong to refuse the food. This can lead to unhealthy attitudes about food or self.

INSTEAD OF ...

No dessert until you eat your vegetables.
Stop crying and I will give you a cookie.

Offering some foods, like dessert, in reward for finishing others, like vegetables, makes some foods seem better than others. Getting a food treat when upset teaches your child to eat to feel better. This can lead to overeating.

Phrases that *HELP*

TRY ...

This is kiwi fruit; it's sweet like a strawberry.
These radishes are very crunchy!

Phrases like these help to point out the sensory qualities of food. They encourage your child to try new foods.

TRY ...

Is your stomach telling you that you're full?
Is your stomach still making its hungry growling noise?
Has your tummy had enough?

Phrases like these help your child to recognize when he or she is full. This can prevent overeating.

TRY ...

Do you like that?
Which one is your favorite?
Everybody likes different foods, don't they?

Phrases like these make your child feel like he or she is making the choices. It also shifts the focus toward the taste of food rather than who was right.

TRY ...

We can try these vegetables again another time. Next time would you like to try them raw instead of cooked?
I am sorry you are sad. Come here and let me give you a big hug.

Reward your child with attention and kind words. Comfort him or her with hugs and talks. Show love by spending time and having fun together.

