

Healthy Tips for Picky Eaters



Do any of these statements remind you of your child?

“Ebony will only eat peanut butter sandwiches.”

“Michael won’t eat anything green, just because of the color.”

“Bananas used to be Matt’s favorite food, but now he won’t even touch them.”

Your child may eat only a certain type of food or refuse foods based on a certain color or texture. They may also play at the table and may not want to eat. Don’t worry if your child has some picky eating behaviors. Picky eating behavior is common for many children from the age of 2 to 5 years. As long as your child is growing as the doctor suggests, they are most likely eating enough to be healthy. If you have concerns about your child’s growth or eating behavior, talk to your child’s doctor.

How to cope with picky eating

Your child’s picky eating is temporary. If you don’t make it a big deal, it will usually end before school age. Try the following tips to help you deal with your child’s picky eating behavior in a positive way. Check the ones that work for you and your child.

- **Let your kids be “produce pickers.”** Let them pick out fruits and veggies at the store.
- **Have your child help you prepare meals.** Children learn about food and get excited about tasting food when they help make meals. Let them add ingredients, scrub veggies, or help stir food.



- **Offer choices.** Rather than ask, “Do you want broccoli for dinner?” ask “Which would you like for dinner, broccoli or cauliflower?”
- **Enjoy each other while eating family meals together.** Talk about what family members did during the day, what made you laugh, or what you did for fun. Turn off the TV and keep phones away from the table to focus on family time.
- **Offer the same foods for the whole family.** Serve the same meal to adults and kids. Let them see you enjoy a variety of healthy foods. Talk about the colors, shapes, and textures on the plate.

Trying new foods

Your child may not want to try new foods. It is normal for children to reject foods they have never tried before. Here are some tips to get your child to try new foods:

- **Start with small portions.** Let your kids try small portions of you 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.
- **Offer 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.
- **Be a good role model.** Try new foods yourself. Describe their taste, texture, and smell to your child.
- **Offer new foods first.** Your child is most hungry at the start of a meal.
- **Offer new foods many times.** Sometimes, new foods take time. Kids don't always take to new foods right away. It may take up to a dozen tries for a child to accept a new food.



Let your kids learn by serving themselves. Teach them to take small amounts at first. Tell your kids that they can get more food if they are still hungry.



They learn from watching you. Eat fruits and vegetables and your child will, too.

Make food fun!

Help your child develop healthy eating habits by getting him or her involved and making food fun! Get creative in the kitchen with these cool ideas. Check the ones you try at home, and be sure to add your own ideas, too!



Make meals and memories together. It's a lesson they'll use for life.

- **Cut a food into fun, easy shapes with cookie cutters.**
- **Encourage your child to invent and help prepare new snacks.** Create new tastes by mixing two or more food groups together to make interesting pairings.
- **Name a food your child helps create.** Make a big deal of serving "Maria's Salad" or "Peter's Sweet Potatoes" for dinner.
- **Our family ideas to make food fun:**
