

Picky Eaters

It's frustrating when toddlers and kids are picky. Experts have noticed that the sooner and more often that children are exposed to treats, sweets, juices and sweetened drinks, the pickier they become. Have faith in your child's natural hunger, and have patience; when hungry a child will eat. Rabelais wrote, "Hunger makes great sauce." Don't fall into the trap of offering more and more milk, as a substitute for a balanced diet; more than 24 ounces/day of milk will curb your child's appetite and will lead to nutritional imbalance. If you're doing that, cut back on the milk, allow your child to be hungry, and give it several days, during which, thru natural trial-and-error, your child will learn that eating a healthy variety of real food curbs hunger and is thereby rewarding in just the way you want it to be.

Strategies:

Ask yourself, "What is it that my child prefers, and why?" Learn what flavors, textures, temperatures, and quantities they like, and format other foods to fit.

Make mealtime stress-free. Have no expectations, don't be distracted.

Your child should see other people eating a healthy and varied diet in a similar setting.

Give lots of encouragement for even the smallest bites. But don't reward a bite of good food with junk, or sweets! And never punish for poor "eating performance".

Don't be discouraged if your child refuses a new food, or texture. Try again another time, and again and again.

Don't get into a power struggle about food. Your child craves your attention about anything. Entering into a power struggle about food is actually positively rewarding for your child!

Combine new foods with familiar ones.

Lots of variety

Some kids are never going to sit down and feed at a formatted meal-time. If yours is like that, he or she may get more of their valuable nutrition by "grazing" little healthy bites, between meals, for example at their play table. Be prepared for, and accept, a big mess !