

BABY BYTES

For families with infants and young children

The Picky Eater

Feeding challenges are common and normal. "Picky" eating is when a child eats the same foods over and over or regularly does not want to eat foods. It usually peaks during the toddler and preschool years. Parents worry that their child may not be getting the nutrition they need but in most cases they are.



TIPS FOR TODDLERS' EATING SUCCESS

- Make meal time a positive experience, avoid power struggles try not to stress over your toddlers food refusal - refusing to try or eat a new food is a way for a child to take control
- Be a good role model, children learn a lot from what adults say and do and will copy your example
- Make them part of the fun - shopping, menu planning, and preparing.
- Don't short-order cook, don't offer something else, end the meal and offer a snack 2-3 hours later.
- Be patient with new foods - repeated exposure is sometimes needed with new foods.
- Stick to routine, try and serve meals and snacks at about the same time every day.
- Avoid 'grazing', ie. eating small amounts of food throughout the day.
- Have children eat at the table/highchair, sit down with your child
- Minimize distractions - turn off the television during meals and talk about what you are eating instead (colour, shape, smell, where it comes from).

IF MEALTIME CONTINUES TO BE A CHALLENGE

- Offer it when they are hungry
- Keep it small
- Cut it up
- Hide it
- Freeze it
- Dip it
- Sauce it
- Liquefy it

Play Ideas with Food

- String-cheerios, pasta on string, pipe cleaners or licorice
- Stack - foods, crackers, orange slices, marshmallows
- Sort shapes - cereal, crackers, pasta, fruit slices
- Count - anything
- Create- arts and crafts, macaroni, pudding paintings
- Help with serving food to others
- Help create pizzas, tacos, pita pockets, sandwich wraps

Divided Plate

- Look for a plate divided into 3 sections
- Try to find a favourite character or action hero
- Put on favourite food and one acceptable food on the plate
- In the third spot place a new food
- Work on tolerating the food on the plate
- Use gradual exposure techniques and gradually increase expectation

Gradual Exposure

- Smell it
- Touch it
- Hand it to someone
- Put it on lips... then lick it
- Put it on tongue
- Put it on tongue and swallow it

1-2-3 Method

This method helps build trust, provides a beginning and an end and helps to build tolerance.

- Start with a simple expectation that the child will accept, such as touching a food. Count to 3 while child touches the food and say "all done", then take the food away.
- Gradually increase the length of time it takes to count to three so that the child touches the food longer, but knows that you will take it away as soon as you reach three.
- Gradually increase the expectation. Have the child touch the food to the lips. Count to three and "all done". Never go past three.
- Keep increasing the expectation as tolerated by the child. E.g. lick the food; then bite the food; then bite and chew; then bite, chew and swallow.

Source: <https://www.zerotothree.org/resources/1072-how-to-handle-picky-eaters>

Nutrition for Young Children, Best Practice Guidelines

http://www.simcoemuskokahealth.org/docs/default-source/jfy-childcare/2018_nutrition-for-young-children_final-v1-1.pdf?sfvrsn=2