

Healthy Foods for Picky Eaters



Now you have healthy food choices in your house. How do you get your family to eat them? Kids can be picky eaters. And they may resist new tastes. But your whole family can learn to eat healthy foods together.



Getting kids to try new foods

Kids may not want to eat foods that are new to them. That's normal. But forcing kids to eat can lead to fighting. It also makes parents and kids feel bad about food. How can you encourage your child to try new tastes?

- Have your child help choose and prepare new foods. Take them to the grocery store with you and let them pick out a new fruit, vegetable, or other healthy food to try. When you get home, let them help with age-appropriate kitchen tasks, such as washing produce, tearing the lettuce, measuring and stirring ingredients, or setting the table. Your child will get excited about tasting foods they've helped choose and prepare.
- Kids often say "I don't like it!" without even trying a food. To help your child get used to new foods, serve only a very small amount. Ask your child to at least taste it. Don't force them to eat it.
- Set an example. Your child looks up to you and wants to be like you. If they see you eating the new food yourself, they are more likely to give it a try, too.
- Prepare and serve the new food in different ways. If your child didn't like the raw broccoli you served, try steaming it, roasting it, sautéing it as part of a stir-fry, or pairing it with some carrot sticks and making a funny face on the plate with them. Try to get in all five food groups throughout the day.
- It may take a long time for your child to feel OK with a new food. You might have to serve a new food 10 or more times before your child accepts it. Don't give up. Over time, the food will be more familiar to your child.
- Don't overwhelm your child with too many new things at once. Try only one new food at a time and serve it alongside familiar foods. To cut down on wasting food, offer new foods in small amounts.

One meal for the whole family

The whole family should be offered the same food you make for each meal. You don't have to give in to a picky eater's demands. You're not a short-order cook, so don't make different foods for each person.

- Serve the new food to each family member. If your child doesn't want to eat it, that's OK. Put your child's portion of food in the fridge for when they are hungry later.

- Your child might not be ready to eat a new food. So also serve at least one healthy food that your child is familiar with as part of each meal.

Don't reward kids for healthy eating

Have you ever offered your child dessert for trying a new vegetable at dinner? This can make kids think that a sweet food is better than a healthy one. Don't bribe your child to try new foods. Instead, ask your child to taste the new food, and keep serving it until it becomes familiar.

To learn more

To get more info on feeding kids who are picky eaters:

- www.fruitsandveggies.org
- www.eatright.org
- www.healthychildren.org
- www.myplate.gov

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