

Nutrition for Picky Toddlers: Getting Them to Eat Right

Feeding a toddler can feel like a battle, especially when they turn up their nose at everything but biscuits! Picky eating is common between 1–3 years, but with patience and creativity, you can ensure your child gets the nutrients they need. Here's a guide for Pakistani parents.

Why Toddlers Get Picky

- **Developing taste:** Their taste buds are evolving, and they may reject strong flavors.
- **Control:** Saying “no” to food is a way to assert independence.
- **Small stomachs:** They need less food than you think, but frequent meals.
- **Neophobia:** Fear of new foods peaks around age 2.

Tips to Encourage Healthy Eating

1. **Offer variety:** Include a mix of carbs (roti, rice), proteins (daal, chicken), and veggies (carrots, peas) in small portions. Don't force them to finish.
2. **Make it fun:** Cut rotis into shapes, arrange veggies like a smiley face, or call broccoli “tiny trees.” Toddlers love playful presentations.
3. **Involve them:** Let them “help” in the kitchen—stirring batter or picking a fruit builds interest in food.
4. **Keep a schedule:** Offer 3 meals and 2–3 snacks daily. Avoid grazing all day; it reduces appetite.
5. **Model good habits:** Eat together as a family. If they see you enjoying sabzi, they're more likely to try it.
6. **Limit distractions:** No TV or toys at mealtime. Focus on the food.
7. **Retry, don't give up:** It can take 10–15 tries for a toddler to accept a new food. Offer it in different ways (e.g., mashed vs. diced carrots).

Pakistani Food Ideas

- **Breakfast:** Khichdi with a little ghee or suji ka halwa with milk.
- **Lunch/Dinner:** Chicken qeema with roti, daal-chawal, or veggie pulao.
- **Snacks:** Boiled egg slices, fruit chaat, or homemade yogurt with honey.
- **Desi hack:** Blend veggies into daal or qeema for hidden nutrition.

What to Avoid

- **Too much sugar:** Limit mithai or packaged juices; they kill appetite for meals.
- **Forcing food:** It creates negative associations. Let them explore at their pace.
- **Overloading milk:** 400–500 ml daily is enough. Too much reduces hunger.

When to Seek Help

If your toddler refuses entire food groups, loses weight, or gags on textures, consult a pediatrician or nutritionist to check for deficiencies or sensory issues.

Feeding a picky toddler takes time, but with these tips, you'll turn mealtime into a happy, healthy habit. Keep offering those desi delights—they'll come around!