



Meal Tips for Picky Eaters

Create a Routine

- Offer **3 meals and 2-3 snacks** at about the same time each day. Allow 2 hours between the end of one meal/snack and the start of another.
- Serve all meals in a **standard eating area**. Seat your child in a high chair or booster seat. Turn off the television and don't allow toys at the table.
- Make dinner time a routine **family event**. Talk to your child about things that interest her and don't "nag" her to eat. Don't threaten her if she doesn't eat.



- **Don't change what you have planned for meals based on your child's likes/dislikes**, but always try to include at least one item that she likes. Always include a fruit or vegetable.

At the Table

- **Don't compare her eating to the way others eat**---especially her brothers or sisters.
- **Put the food on her plate**. If she doesn't want it, offer one other healthy option (for example, a sandwich). If she doesn't want that, don't force her to eat, but be clear that she will need to stay at the table until the meal is over.
- If she didn't eat her food and is hungry later, give her the same options she had for the meal or a healthy snack of fruit or low-fat yogurt. If she doesn't want them, she will have to wait until the next meal. If she throws a fit, react as you would for any tantrum. **Be consistent and patient**. Remember, it can take about 3 days to a week for a child to become used to a new food.
- **Set time limits for each meal** (20-25 minutes) and snack (15-20 minutes). When the time is up, tell the child that the meal/snack is over and clear the table, even if she isn't finished.
- **Set a good example**. If you eat a variety of healthy foods, your child is more likely to do the same. Serve fruits and vegetables every day, particularly as snacks.
- **Plain tap water is the best alternative to 100% fruit juice or milk**. Low-fat milks are fine for children over 2 years old, unless your pediatrician advises otherwise. Ask your pediatrician how much low-fat milk your child needs.
- **Never use food as a reward**. Praise your child for good behavior at the table.

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