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Children's Health: Picky Eaters

Teach healthy eating habits early in life

You know it's important to feed your children a wide variety of healthy foods. But what if they are resistant to trying something new?

Don't Give In

As hard as it may be to listen to your child whining about how much he/she dislikes a certain food, stand firm. By giving in to demands, you are setting a precedent that your child will take advantage of for years to come. Make it clear that you are serving one meal for the family, and one meal only. When your child sees everyone else enjoying the meal, he/she will be more likely to partake in it as well.

Dos and Don'ts

- Have everyone at the table eat the protested food as if it is the best thing they ever tasted. Place the dish near your child; he/she may be tempted to try it.
- Try to include at least two side dishes you know your child will eat; that way, if he/she refuses to touch the main course, at least there are other options.
- Make a game out of eating for younger children. Say "I know you can eat one forkful easily, but I bet you won't be able to eat two. And three – forget about it!" He/she may

be excited to prove you wrong.

- If your child does try a food but still does not like it, praise him/her for making the effort.
- Hide your dislike of certain foods from your child. If he/she sees that you don't like something, it's likely he/she will not even try it.
- Never tell your child he/she cannot leave the table until the food is finished. The "clean your plate" mentality may actually promote childhood obesity by encouraging overeating.
- Do not negotiate. If you say "Eat all your carrots," do not let it become "Eat just one carrot."
- Use your discretion on offering dessert to your picky eater. If you feel a genuine attempt was made to try the food, you may want to reward that effort.
- If your child asks for a snack after dinner, offer a piece of fruit or glass of milk. Do NOT allow him/her to have dessert as a snack.

Helpful Hints

- Ask your children to help you prepare dinner. This will get them excited about trying the meal they had a hand in creating.
- Serve a do-it-yourself meal, such as tacos. Your child will be able to make the item to his/her liking.
- Sometimes the presentation of a food can make all the difference. Get creative – make shapes or smiley faces.
- Hide a food within another. For example, you can puree vegetables and blend them into stews, soups and sauces.
- Lead by example. If you don't eat healthy foods, your child won't want to either.



Did you know...?

Chicken nuggets and fries are fun meals on occasion, but don't make it a habit of serving this type of food. They will not provide the adequate nutrition your child's needs.