

Picky Eating

Picky eating can be a child's first step toward showing independence. Plus, a child's size, age, developmental stage, and mood all can affect how he or she eats. This can make mealtimes hard. What can you do to make them happier?



Follow these tips to help prevent food battles:

Adults decide:

- What to eat
- When to eat
- Where to eat

Kids decide:

- How much to eat
- Whether or not to eat

Make Mealtimes Happier

- Limit distractions by putting away toys, phones, and turning off the TV before eating.
- Allow children to serve themselves. Teach them to start with small amounts and to take more if they're still hungry.

• Involve kids in shopping and cooking.



- Be a role model. Kids learn from watching you, so show them you enjoy different foods.
- Make food fun!
 - ▶ Give kids age-appropriate tasks like washing veggies or stirring ingredients.
 - ▶ Cut foods into fun shapes with cookie cutters.
 - ▶ Let kids dip foods in yogurt, hummus, ketchup, and low-fat dressings to add extra flavor.



Try New Foods

It's normal for kids to not like foods they have never tried before. Liking new foods takes time. You may need to offer a new food **10 to 15 times** before a child will try it.

- Offer only one new food at a time.
- Taste the food with your child. Ask your child about the taste, texture, color, and smell of the food.
- Make sure there is at least one healthy food your child likes to eat at every meal.



Picky Eating: What NOT to Do

Don't force your child to eat.

Forcing your child to eat teaches them to ignore signals their body gives them when they're hungry or full.

Don't nag or bribe your child.

Nagging, bribing, or making deals can make mealtimes even more challenging.

Avoid using food as a reward.

Offering dessert as a reward sends your child the message that sweets are better than the main meal. This can make sweets even more desirable.

