

How to Handle a Picky Eater

Kids
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it!



10 To Do's for Dealing With a Picky Eater

When you get home from a long day at work, the last thing you want to do is wage war over broccoli at the dinner table. That's why it's so easy to fall into the trap of making mac-n-cheese or ordering pizza. It keeps you out of an "eat your vegetables" fight. The good news is, getting a picky eater to eat a nutritious meal doesn't have to be a battle. Here are some tips for dealing with a picky eater:

- 1. Mix in Healthy Stuff.** Mix healthier foods into foods that your child already likes. For example: add blueberries to pancakes; mix grated zucchini or carrots into muffins, meatloaf and soups; add fruit slices to a favorite cereal; mix chunks of broccoli into mac-n-cheese; or serve shredded veggies over rice.
- 2. Include Your Kids.** Kids of all ages can help with menu planning, grocery shopping, and meal preparation. By being involved, kids will have more buy-in. If they feel some ownership over the meal, they will be more likely to eat it.
- 3. Don't Buy Unhealthy Foods.** Out of sight, out of mind. If the chips and cookies aren't around, your kids can't eat them. They may resist at first, but when hungry, they'll start munching the carrot sticks. Keep healthy foods on hand - 100% fruit juice instead of colas or sugary drinks, and a bag of apples instead of a bag of chips.
- 4. Establish an Eating Routine.** Serve meals and snacks at about the same times every day. Most kids like routine. If your kids know they will only get food at certain times, they'll eat what they get when they get it. Try to have snacks incorporate two food groups. For example, offer cheese and whole-grain crackers or apple slices with low-fat yogurt or cottage cheese.

- 5. Have Healthy Finger Foods Available.** Kids like to pick up foods, so give them foods they can handle. Fruit and veggie chunks, raw or cooked, are great finger food options.
- 6. Repeat the "Clean Your Plate" Rule.** Kids know when they're full, so let them stop. Overeating is one of the major reasons we get too many calories.
- 7. Encourage Kids to "Eat their Colors."** This game works well with younger kids. Eating a variety of brightly colored foods gives kids more of the nutrients they need. Food that is bland in color often lacks nutrients.
- 8. Don't Forbid Foods.** Forbidden foods can quickly become the foods of greatest desire. A scoop of ice cream or a few cookies are all right occasionally. Think moderation. Allow kids to choose a special food from time to time and let them eat it guilt free. If you cut out all the goodies, your kids will be more likely to overeat when they do get them.
- 9. Turn Off the TV While Eating.** Eating in front of the TV is distracting, and kids may not notice that they're full because they're wrapped up in the show. Eating as a family – without the TV – is a great time to catch up.
- 10. Be a Good Role Model.** The best way to influence kids is by example. Don't expect them to eat spinach if you won't touch it.

Source: www.AmericanHeart.org

CanDo – Coalition for Activity and Nutrition to Defeat Obesity

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