



Navigating Picky Eating: A Nutritionist's Guide for Parents

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Agenda

- Understanding Picky Eating
- The Parent-Child Dynamic in Feeding
- Effective Strategies for Picky Eaters
- Picky Eating Tips
- Creating a Positive Mealtime
- Environment Nutrition Education for Children
- Q&A



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What is a Picky Eater?

Definition

- Your child may refuse to eat familiar foods or avoid trying new ones.
- They might be very specific about what they like and dislike.
- Avoids certain tastes, textures, and types of food
- May have strong preferences and reactions to specific foods



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Children are Naturally Picky Eaters

- Picky eating is a normal developmental phase
- Children may need 15-20 exposures to a new food before trying it
- Eating behaviors develop through:
 - Direct experiences with food
 - Observing others' eating behaviors



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Causes of Picky Eating


- Some kids are naturally sensitive to taste or texture.
- Others might just be going through a phase as they learn to make choices on their own.
- Cultural/Family Influences




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Why is your child not eating at mealtime?

- Not hungry
- Sensory overload
- Sitting is hard
- Too much water, juice, or milk
- Belly Troubles
 - Trouble Chewing
 - Extra Cautious



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Why Your Picky Eater Loves Packaged Foods

EXACTLY THE SAME

EVERY SINGLE TIME

Image Credits: Amy Friedman - Picky Eating 40, @fhandgardeners / Amy - Picky Eating Dietitian, @fhandgardeners

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Why Your Picky Eater Struggles with Produce

BIG TART JUICY

SMALL SWEET MUSHY

Image Credits: Amy Friedman - Picky Eating 40, @fhandgardeners / Amy - Picky Eating Dietitian, @fhandgardeners

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Things you **CANNOT** control

HOW MUCH YOUR CHILD EATS

WHAT THEY LIKE TO EAT

IF & WHEN THEY TRY A NEW FOOD

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Things you **CAN** control

THE MEALTIME ENVIRONMENT

HOW YOU FRAME EATING

THE WAYS YOU TRY TO SUPPORT THEM

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How Does MyPlate fit?

ChooseMyPlate.gov

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Picky Eating Tips

1. Don't be a "short order cook"

YOUR PLATE

The same foods your child eats. Yes, that means sometimes you can eat fish sticks and chicken nuggets.

THEIR PLATE

foods you choose for dinner including one of their favorites and smaller portions of their not so favorite.

If your child likes fish sticks, they should be offered to the whole family, not just to the child who likes them.

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Picky Eating Tips

2. Start with smaller portions

- Use smaller bowls, plates and utensils for your child.
- Don't insist that children finish all the food on their plate. Let your child know it is okay to only eat as much as he or she wants at that time.

overwhelming approachable

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WHICH PLATE WOULD YOU CHOOSE IF YOU DIDN'T LIKE BROCCOLI?

A large, overwhelming portion of broccoli A teeny tiny portion of broccoli with no pressure

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Picky Eating Tips

3. Pair familiar foods with new foods

WHEN ALL THEY WANT IS THIS
Only the favorites that they want to eat

THEN GIVE THEM THIS
Continue to expose them to new or disliked foods in small portions and engaging ways

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MAKE SMALL CHANGES TO THEIR FAVORITES

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Picky Eating Tips

4. Sometimes all it takes is trying the food another way

Offer Variety!

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Picky Eating Tips

4. Sometimes all it takes is trying the food another way

Offer Variety!

AT LEAST 1-2% EVERY MEAL ROTATE OFTEN CHANGE THEM UP

USE AS FILLER ABOUT HALF THE WAY OFFER AS ONE OF SEVERAL OPTIONS USE TO BRIDGE TO NEW FOODS

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Picky Eating Tips

5. Include them in the kitchen

Kids like to try foods they help make



Source: <http://www.choosemyplate.gov/pickyeaters.html>

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Picky Eating Tips

5. Include them in the kitchen

A child that helps in the kitchen...



Source: <http://www.choosemyplate.gov/pickyeaters.html>

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Picky Eating Tips

5. Include them in the kitchen

Tries and likes more foods



Source: <http://www.choosemyplate.gov/pickyeaters.html>

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Picky Eating Tips

5. Include them in the kitchen

Gains confidence, feels important and proud



Source: <http://www.choosemyplate.gov/pickyeaters.html>

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Picky Eating Tips

5. Include them in the kitchen

- Learns early math and science concepts
- Develops small muscle skills
- Learns new vocabulary



Source: <http://www.choosemyplate.gov/pickyeaters.html>

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Picky Eating Tips

5. Include them in the kitchen

Learns responsibility with cleanup



Source: <http://www.choosemyplate.gov/pickyeaters.html>

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Age	Activities
18 months to 3 years	Rinse produce, stir ingredients, oil pan or veggies with pastry brush, use plastic cookie cutters, arrange foods into interesting shapes/designs.
3-5 year olds	Measuring, cut soft items with sturdy plastic knife/dough scraper, tearing greens, kneading, spreading, pick herbs
5-7 year olds	Cut herbs with scissors, peel oranges and cooled hard boiled eggs, setting the table, push button on blender
8-11 year olds	Peel vegetables, open cans, crack eggs, learn and use basic knife skills with small knife, whisk, find ingredients, follow a simple recipe
12 years and older	Chop vegetables, make salad, boil pasta, cook eggs, basic menu planning, supervised microwave and stove use, then more complex recipes and gradually less supervision

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Picky Eating Tips

6. Dine “family-style” if possible



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As a Role Model

- Wash your hands
- Set your place at the table
- Serve yourself a child's portion of every food component on the table
- Remain seated, assisting children as needed
- Wait patiently for food to be served
- Try all foods enthusiastically
- Say “please” and “thank you”
- Eat slowly setting the pace for the children
- Engage in meaningful child conversations
- Handle spills calmly
- Wait patiently while children eat
- Enjoy your meal
- Clear your place setting
- Wash your hands

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Picky Eating Tips

7. Make mealtime a positive environment

Offering Foods with No Pressure

- What you can say to offer food without pressure:
“Today we have curried chicken – children in India eat their chicken this way. It tastes spicy. See what you think...”
- Praise them when they try it
- Don't make a big deal if they don't like it or won't try it but do not offer alternatives

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Picky Eating Tips

Talking about Nutrition

- Children should learn the benefits of eating nutritious foods
- Whole grains for fiber and energy
- Fruits and Vegetables for fiber, vitamins, and minerals
- Dairy for Calcium and Vitamins (healthy strong bone)

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Picky Eating Tips

Teach how to politely decline food



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Other Considerations



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Help them know when they've had enough

01 Let them learn by serving themselves	02 Avoid praising a clean plate	03 Reward children with attention and kind words, not food	04 Try not to restrict specific foods
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No matter when you offer desserts...

01 Don't make them a big deal	02 Avoid making them eat certain foods or amounts before eating the dessert	03 Don't speak negatively about desserts	04 Avoid using dessert as a reward
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You Have the Power

Remember


Small changes can achieve HUGE results – especially with food and nutrition.

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Stay Consistent

- **Be Patient:** It might take a few tries before your child accepts a new food. Stay patient!
- **Stay Informed:** Make sure to follow nutrition guidelines for your child's age group.




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Professional Support & Healthy Relationship with Food

- **Consult Experts:** Nutritionists or pediatricians can offer personalized advice
- **Foster a Positive Relationship:** Avoid power struggles; keep mealtimes calm and patient



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