NATIONAL ENRICHMENT GROUP
ENHANCING COMMUNITIES

Food Explorer Academy Adventures in Trying New Foods!

Presented by: Noemy Jorge MS RD CDN
Date: 11/06/2025

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Agenda

- Meet the Food Explorers (aka The Picky Eaters)
- Food Explorer Training Adventures (fun ways to try new foods)
- Explorer Questions & Discovery Time

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Food Explorers

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Children are Naturally Picky Eaters

- Children normally go through stages of being picky about food.
- Food Neophobia (fear of new foods) is a natural stage of development, typically peaking between 18 to 24 months.
- Children are hesitant or even afraid to try new items. They need to see, touch and think about it several times before eating it.
- It can take 10-20 times before they learn to eat a new food.

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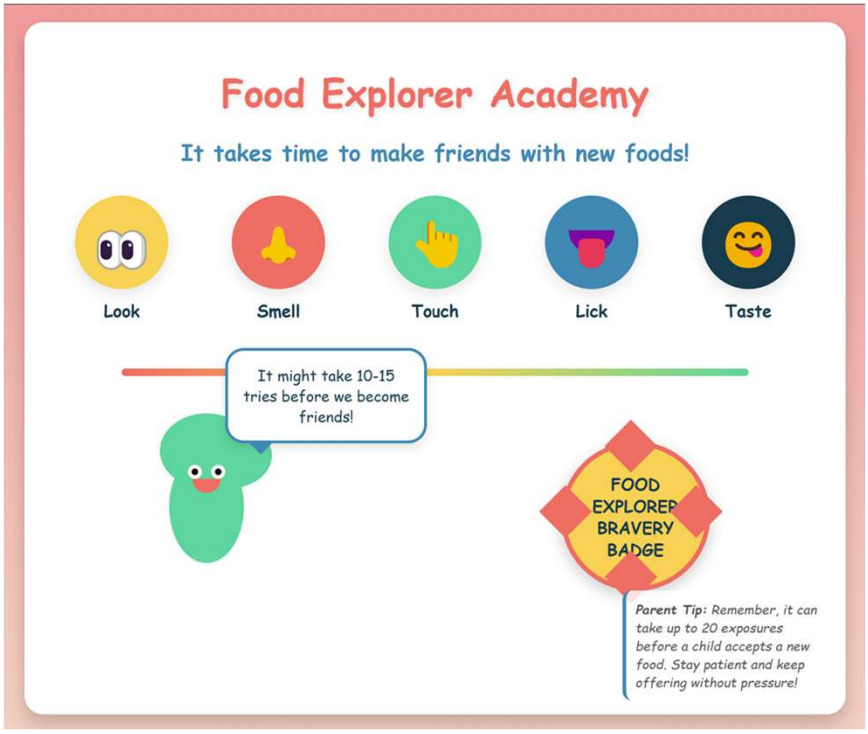

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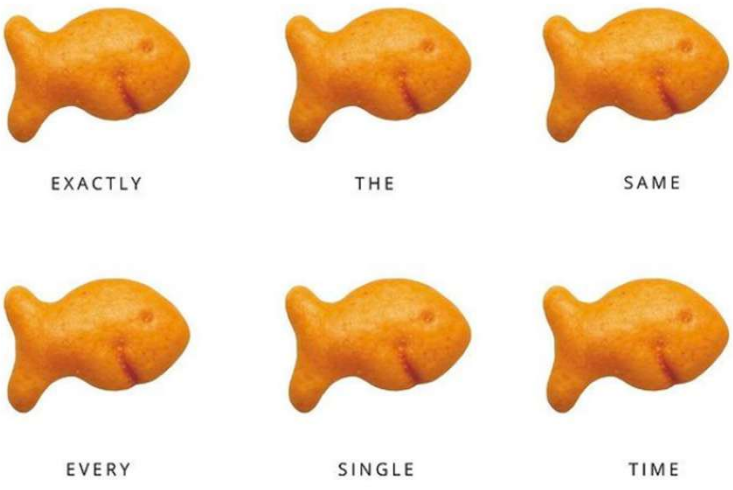

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WHY YOUR PICKY EATER STRUGGLES WITH PRODUCE


BIG


TART


JUICY


SMALL


SWEET


MUSHY

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Healthy Habits: Establishing Positive Drinking Behaviors

- Prolonged bottle drinking can damage baby teeth.
- Mobile toddlers often carry their bottles, leading to continuous consumption, unlike infants who are fed while held and have the bottle removed promptly.
- Non-water contents in bottles create acidic solutions that can erode teeth, causing cavities.
- Bottle drinkers consume excessive milk, up to 32 ounces a day, surpassing recommended servings and **potentially reducing intake of solid foods and essential nutrients like iron (Leading to picky eating)**

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Healthy Habits: Establishing Positive Drinking Behaviors

The Gradual Phase-Out Approach

- This method is most effective for younger toddlers, typically spanning over a month.
- Begin by decreasing the number of bottles offered, replacing them with cups of milk or snacks gradually.
- Start by phasing out the least essential bottles first, often the midday ones.

Creative Transition Strategies

- Engage your child by allowing them to choose a special new cup or decorating an existing one.
- Introduce novelty with amusing straws to make cups more enticing during the transition.

Positive Outcomes with Gradual Weaning

- By employing this gradual approach, toddlers aged 12 to 15 months can often transition smoothly, potentially eliminating morning or bedtime bottles without resistance.

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Healthy Habits: Establishing Positive Drinking Behaviors

Going Cold Turkey Approach:

- Suitable for children strongly attached to their bottles as comfort objects, especially if they're down to one or two daily bottles.
- Abrupt withdrawal may be the most effective method, though it can be challenging.

Transition Preparation:

- Ease your child into the idea of giving up bottles by discussing it a week before.
- Physically remove bottles from the house to reinforce the transition.

Child Participation:

- Involve your child in the process, acknowledging the difficulty of the change.

Incentives and Support:

- Offer rewards for successfully going without the bottle.
- Have alternative drinks ready for when the child craves the bottle.

Substitution Strategy: Discuss replacing the bottle with a soothing object like a teddy bear, providing comfort during the transition.

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Picky Eating How to Cope

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1. Start with smaller portions

Introduce 1 new food at a time in small portions.

Pair new foods with familiar favorites to reduce overwhelm.

Let your child decide how much to eat—no pressure to finish the plate.

overwhelming

approachable

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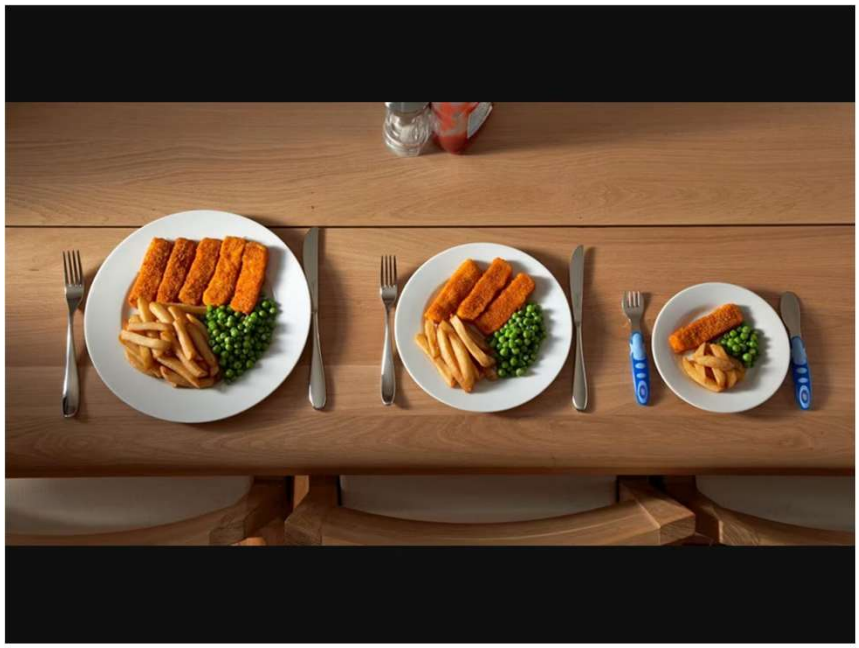

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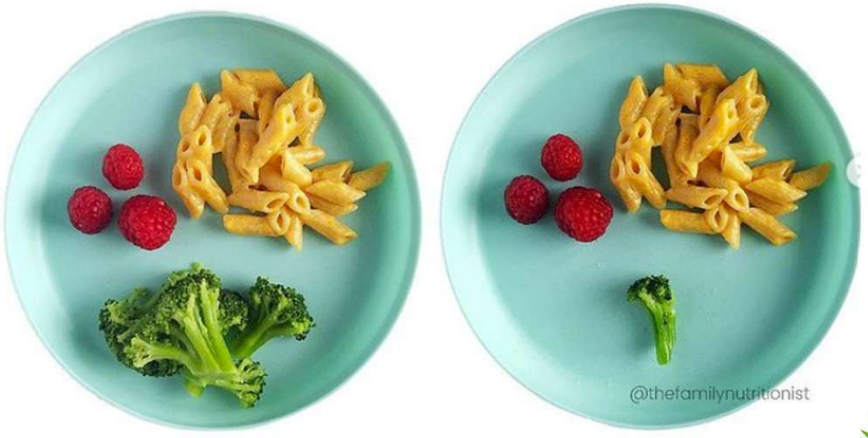
WHICH PLATE WOULD YOU *choose* IF YOU DIDN'T LIKE BROCCOLI?



A large, overwhelming portion of broccoli

A teeny tiny portion of broccoli with no pressure

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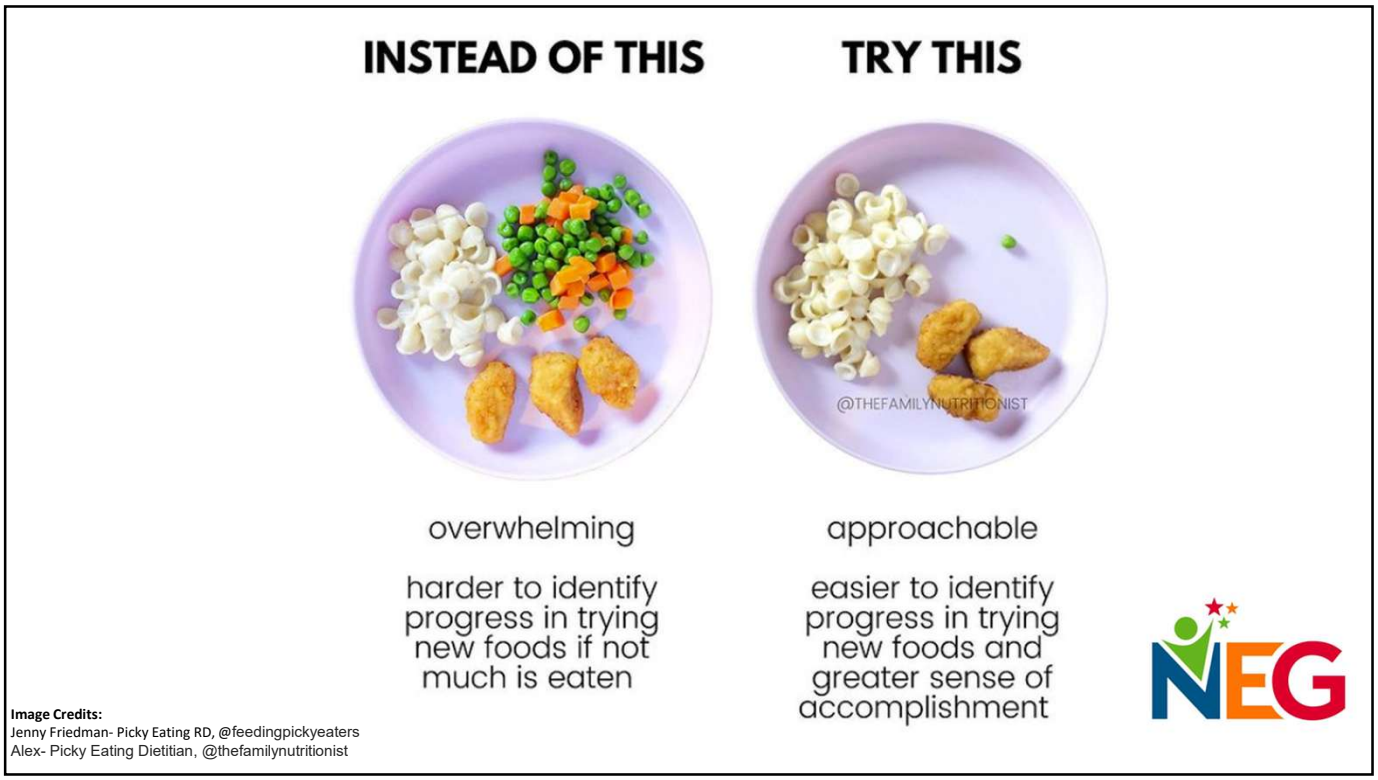

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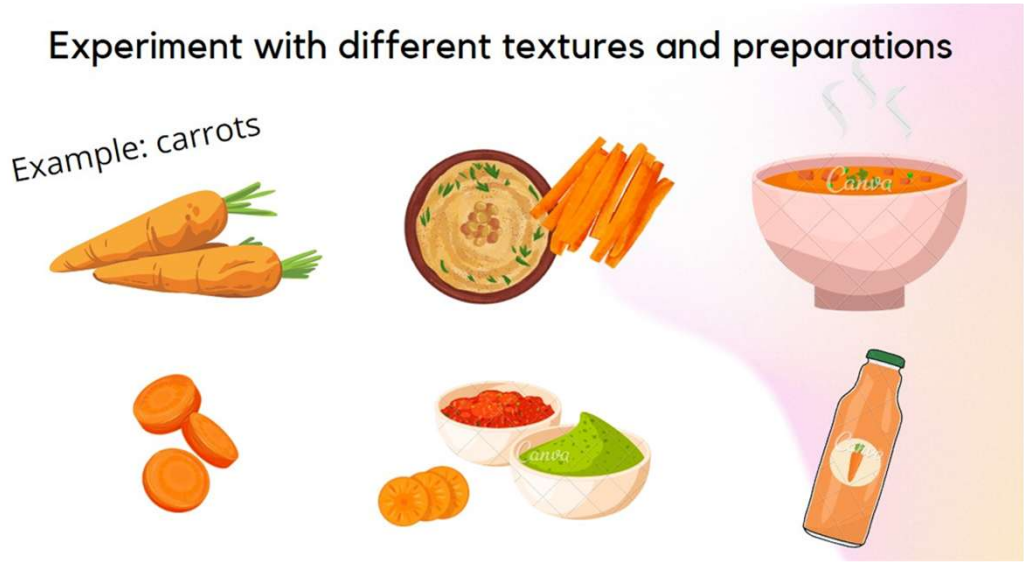
2. Offer variety (Sometimes all it takes is trying the food another way…)



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IF THIS IS AN ISSUE

weird taste or texture?

FRESH FRUITS & BERRIES
NCONSISTENT & UNPREDICTABLE
JUICY! BIG FLAVOR!
SUPER NUTRITIOUS

YOU CAN TRY

more comfortable taste & texture

FROZEN FRUITS & BERRIES
CONSISTENT & PREDICTABLE
NO JUICE! FLAVOR TAMED!
SUPER NUTRITIOUS

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Try a different way of cooking the food - steamed vs roasted

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3. Don't Be a “Short-Order Cook.”

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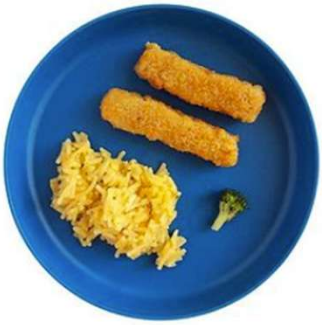
YOUR PLATE

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

THEIR PLATE

foods you chose 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 ENTIRE family, not just to the child who likes them.

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4. Avoid Pressure

Offer Foods Without Praise or Pressure—Let Curiosity Lead the Way!

- The more we pressure, the less they eat; Creates negative association with food and meal time.
- Don’t make a big deal if they don’t like it or won’t try it. You can say, “That’s okay, you don’t like it YET.”
- Have napkins on the table so that if the child is ready to taste the food, they can politely spit it out if they don’t like it!
- This gives them the opportunity to learn to like it.

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Phrases that *HELP* and *HINDER*

As the caregiver, you play the biggest role in your child's eating behavior.
What you say has an impact on developing healthy eating habits.
Negative phrases can easily be changed into positive, helpful ones!

Phrases that *HINDER*	Phrases that *HELP*
INSTEAD OF ...	**TRY ...**
Eat that for me. *If you do not eat one more bite, I will be mad.* Phrases like these teach your child to eat for your approval and love. This can lead your child to have unhealthy behaviors, attitudes, and beliefs about food and about themselves.	***This is kiwi fruit; it's sweet like a strawberry.*** ***These radishes are very crunchy!*** Phrases like these help to point out the sensory qualities of food. They encourage your child to try new foods.
INSTEAD OF ...	**TRY ...**
You're such a big girl; you finished all your peas. ***Jenny, look at your sister. She ate all of her bananas.*** ***You have to take one more bite before you leave the table.*** Phrases like these teach your child to ignore fullness. It is better for kids to stop eating when full or satisfied than when all of the food has been eaten.	***Is your stomach telling you that you're full?*** ***Is your stomach still making its hungry growling noise?*** ***Has your tummy had enough?*** Phrases like these help your child to recognize when he or she is full. This can prevent overeating.
INSTEAD OF ...	**TRY ...**
See, that didn't taste so bad, did it? This implies to your child that he or she was wrong to refuse the food. This can lead to unhealthy attitudes about food or self.	***Do you like that?*** ***Which one is your favorite?*** ***Everybody likes different foods, don't they?*** Phrases like these make your child feel like he or she is making the choices. It also shifts the focus toward the taste of food rather than who was right.
INSTEAD OF ...	**TRY ...**
No dessert until you eat your vegetables. ***Stop crying and I will give you a cookie.*** Offering some foods, like dessert, in reward for finishing others, like vegetables, makes some foods seem better than others. Getting a food treat when upset teaches your child to eat to feel better. This can lead to overeating.	***We can try these vegetables again another time. Next time would you like to try them raw instead of cooked?*** ***I am sorry you are sad. Come here and let me give you a big hug.*** Reward your child with attention and kind words. Comfort him or her with hugs and talks. Show love by spending time and having fun together.

Adapted from "What You Say Really Matters?" in *Feeding Young Children in Group Settings*, Dr. Janice Fletcher and Dr. Laurel Branen, University of Idaho.

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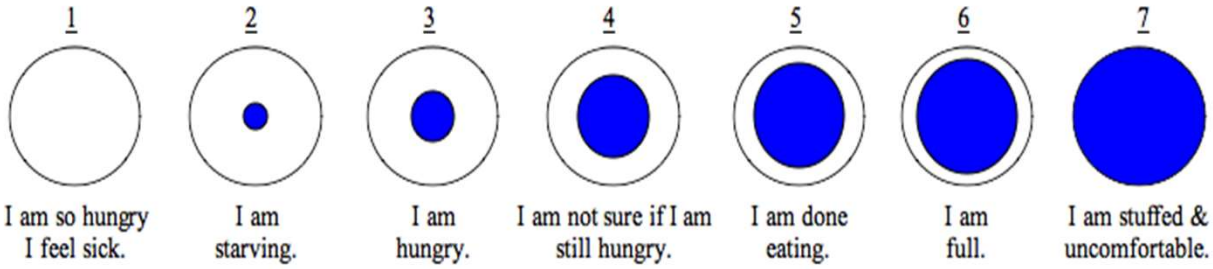
Teach Children to Become Familiar with Their Hunger Cues



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Teach how to politely decline food

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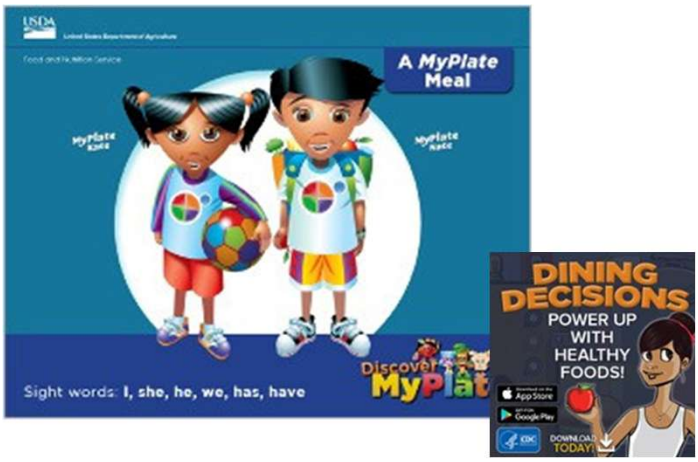
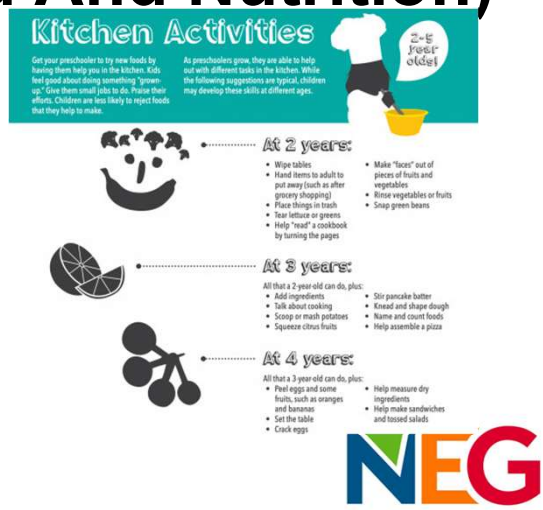
5. Include them in the Kitchen (Teach Your Child About Food And Nutrition)





NEG

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5. Include them in the Kitchen (Teach Your Child About Food And Nutrition)

Kids like to try the food they help make

Gains confidence, feels important and proud

Children that help in the kitchen try and like more foods

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Talking about Nutrition

- Children should learn the benefits of eating nutritious foods
- **Whole grains** give you energy to play and learn
- **Fruits** and **Vegetables** give you a strong heart, help you see in the dark, helps you fight off sickness, etc.
- **Dairy** gives you healthy strong bones
- **Protein** helps build strong muscles

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6. Use Food Play!

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Ways to encourage exploration:

- "I wonder if this food make a crunch sound when I [illegible] is louder than yours"
- "Can you squish it between your fingers?"
- "What color is this food?"
- "Can you make a smiley face out of these peas?"
- "I bet I can make a taller tower out of these carrots than you can!"
- "Let's use the broccoli to make a forest on the table!"

Resist the urge to ask your toddler if they like the food—this shifts the focus from exploration to evaluation and can add pressure, making them hesitant to try it.

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7. Expose Expose Expose!

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Coping with Picky Eating (Recap)

Wean off of the bottle and pacifier if child is past 1 year old

1. Start with smaller portions of new foods
2. Offer foods in a variety of ways
3. Don't be a "short order cook" aka don't give alternatives
4. Avoid Pressure, both positive or negative. Be mindful of language around food.
5. Teach your child about food and nutrition
6. Use Food Play
7. Expose expose expose!

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Coping with Picky Eating (Recap)

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Questions?

THANK YOU!

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