

TIPS FOR DEALING WITH A PICKY EATER

Is My Child's Appetite Normal?



Toddlers usually have very variable and erratic eating habits. They love food one day and dislike it the next or the meal they refused at home is eaten happily away from home. This can be very frustrating and confusing for parents, but it's a common eating pattern for a healthy and active older toddler. Toddlers need a variety of foods daily for good health.

Helping Your Child Eat the Right Amount

Suggestions include:

- ♥ Offer a variety of foods daily.
- ♥ Enjoy eating as a family.
- ♥ Don't force your child to eat when tired or not hungry.
- ♥ Offer water instead of juice or sodas.
- ♥ Offer healthy snacks between meals.
- ♥ Get your child involved in simple meal preparation.
- ♥ Accept some food refusal without worry.
- ♥ Be a role model for your child and eat a healthy diet.

Appetite and hunger can vary

Toddlers have changeable appetites. Growth spurts and changing activity levels during the day can result in a large appetite for a while, followed by a small and picky appetite. The evening meal may cause the most concern, when children are either tired or not hungry. Some reasons for irregular food intake include:

- ♥ Filling up on drinks - in particular, sweet drinks or milk, especially before a meal.
- ♥ Not being very active on that day.
- ♥ Being either too tired to eat or just not hungry.
- ♥ Frequent snacking during the day, although this is generally not a problem if the snacks are nutritious and healthy.

Things to remember

- ♥ Don't force your children to eat – just encourage them & keep meal time a positive experience.
- ♥ Children should be served the same foods as the family, with a variety of textures and flavors for balanced nutrition.
- ♥ Snacks between meals play an important part in the energy intake of young children, so keep these as healthy, nutritious and as interesting as possible. We recommend a mid-morning and mid-afternoon snack.

Food/Meal Refusal

You can help by providing a variety of healthy and nourishing foods for your child to choose from. Children should be served the same foods as the family, with a variety of colors, textures and flavors for balanced nutrition. When a food is refused, the child may not be refusing the actual food but may be testing to see your reaction. Try to avoid getting frustrated and continue encouraging the child to try the food item.

- ♥ Try to stay calm.
- ♥ Don't force your child to eat.
- ♥ Allow your child some likes and dislikes – remember that everyone has their own preferences.
- ♥ Offer new foods with familiar ones.
- ♥ Provide a small spoon or fork and a comfortable chair.
- ♥ Turn off the television - talk at mealtimes instead.
- ♥ Start with a small serving and give more if hungry.
- ♥ If a food is refused, let your child sit quietly for a few minutes before leaving the table.
- ♥ Be a role model for your child. If you eat well, they may copy you.