



Picky Eaters

Do you like to eat broccoli?

Spinach? Onions? How about liver? Everyone has foods that they like and some they don't like. The same is true with children. Sometimes it seems like children have a longer list of "don't like" foods than ones they like. That's when adults get worried.

You Can't Make Me Eat

Children refuse to eat for a number of reasons, including these:

- They aren't hungry
- They want to be in control

There are times when adults aren't hungry and that's true with children too. Children have the right to choose if they want to eat or not. Remember: a truly hungry child will eat! You may want to offer a choice of one other food, such as a peanut butter sandwich, if a child doesn't like what is being served.

When it comes to eating, adults are in charge of what to give the child, as well as where and when they eat. The child chooses if he wants to eat and how much. Never try to force a child to eat.

A truly hungry child will eat.

Snacks Are Important

Children have small stomachs. They often can't hold enough food to keep them going from one meal to the next. Plan a snack time about 2 to 2-1/2 hours after a meal.

When a child says she isn't hungry at mealtime, remove her plate and say, "That's ok. We'll have snack time in a while and maybe you'll be hungry then." Do not give the child anything to eat or drink, except water, until snack time. It shouldn't take long for this child to learn that food is served at meal and snack times. If she's hungry, those are the times to eat.

Be sure to serve healthy foods during snack time. Fruits and vegetables, whole grain breads or crackers, meat, dry beans, peanut butter, milk, cheese, and yogurt are all great snack foods. Children who don't eat during a meal will still get healthy foods to eat when they have snack.



Trying New Foods

Some children are ready and willing to try new foods; others won't touch them. Leave it up to the child to decide if he wants to try a new food. Be a good role model and try it yourself, but never force a child to try a new food.

Some adults have the "one bite" rule to get children to taste a new food. This rule is fine as long as the adult remembers it is for tasting only. Make sure the child knows he can spit out the food into a napkin or put it at the side of his plate if he doesn't like it or doesn't want to eat it. Children will be more likely to try new foods if they know they don't have to swallow anything they don't like.

If a child doesn't like a food the first time she tries it, that doesn't mean she'll hate it forever. Don't give up. Wait a week or two and serve that same food, maybe in a different way. It often takes about ten times of tasting before children get used to and like the taste of a new food.

Never reward a child with a favorite food for tasting a new food (such as giving ice cream as a reward for trying broccoli). Food rewards make children want the reward (ice cream), not the broccoli.

Snack time is a good time for trying new foods. Serve something

you know the children like along with something new. This way the children can eat the food they like, so they may be more willing to try a bite of something new.

One of the best ways to get children to try new foods is to have them help make the food. When children have a hand in making food, they are more likely to want to try it.

Never try to force a child to eat.

Food Jags

There are times when a child may only want to eat the same food over and over again. That doesn't mean you need to prepare the same food day after day so this child has something to eat. Remember: a truly hungry child will eat. Plan your meals and serve them. If she's hungry, she'll eat, but the choice is hers.



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