

A close-up photograph of a young child with blonde hair and a rainbow headband. The child is looking over a white plate filled with various foods, including a slice of watermelon, a green apple, and a slice of bread. The child's eyes are visible, looking directly at the camera.

Tips for  
Picky Eaters!

**Kids can be fussy about what they eat.  
There are things you can do to help.**

# Q&A

## with a Nutritionist:

Let your child  
decide how much  
to eat.

**Q. I serve everyone in the family the same plate of food. My 2-year-old sometimes doesn't even take one bite. What can I do?**

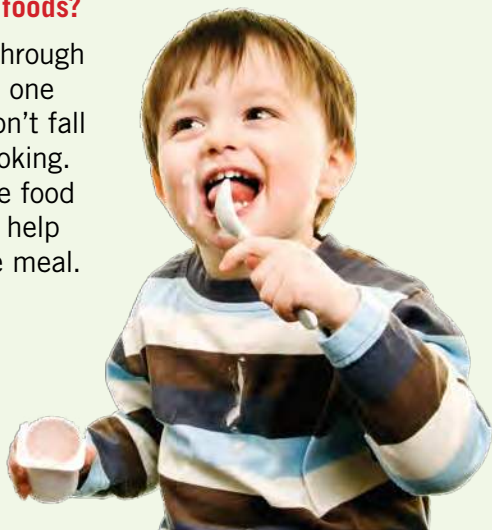
**A.** You've already accomplished a tough step for many parents: having family meals and offering the same foods to everyone. Try to keep mealtimes pleasant and pressure-free. A young child might eat very little, nothing at all, or ask for more, and that's completely normal. Continue to offer healthy meals and snacks that include foods like low-fat milk (1%), yogurt, lean meats, fruits, vegetables, and whole-grain foods. That's how you can make sure that over time your little ones are getting the nutrients they need.

**Q. I saw a commercial for a shake that's supposed to provide all the vitamins and nutrients my child needs. Should I give her one when she doesn't eat her meal?**

**A.** Companies want you to buy their products and are great at making people think their product will "fix" something. Family meals help your child learn to eat what you eat. Offer meals and snacks on a schedule, and let your child decide how much to eat. Trust your child to eat enough to grow.

**Q. Sometimes my 3-year-old will only eat one food for days at a time. I'm worried he isn't getting what he needs to be healthy. How can I get him to eat other foods?**

**A.** It's normal for children to go through a period where they'll only eat one food. Try to be patient, and don't fall into the trap of short-order cooking. Consider including at least one food that your child usually likes to help him feel successful during the meal.



## I may do things that seem like picky eating.

I'm trying to do more things for myself, and I want to do things my way.

I might want to eat only my favorite foods, or some days I might not eat much. This is a normal part of growing up and learning about foods and eating.



## Things you can do to help your picky eater be less picky.

- Offer me small amounts. I may need to have it offered several times before I'll try it.
- Let me try all kinds of foods, even the ones you don't like. This helps me build healthy eating habits for life.
- Feed my independent spirit at meal times. Help me grow and learn by making some decisions on my own. Let me make my own food choices from the healthy foods you offer.
- Keep my mealtimes relaxed. I do better with my eating when we have a happy meal together.

I might not eat at meal or snack time if I've had too much milk or juice throughout the day. Offer me only water between meals and snacks.



## I'm getting older now!

- It's normal for me to eat smaller amounts because I'm not growing as fast.
- I'm learning to make decisions on my own and I may only want to eat one food.
- Trust me to know when I'm hungry and to stop when I'm full.
- Teach me to say "Yes, please" and "No, thank-you."



# 6 SIX WAYS

**you can help me learn  
healthy eating habits!**



1. Let me be part of preparing meals.
2. Set a positive example for me and offer me the same foods as everyone at the table.
3. I like to eat my meals and snacks at regular times.
4. Let me pick what to eat and serve myself from the meals you provide.
5. Trust me to eat enough of the right foods over time.
6. Don't worry if I only eat a little or nothing at one meal! I'll make up for it and get what I need to be healthy over time.

**Sometimes I'm less picky when I get to help.  
Here's something we can make together!**

## **Fruit and Peanut Butter Dip**

1 cup apple slices  
1 cup banana slices  
1 cup pear slices  
1 cup grapes  
1 cup strawberries  
1 cup melon slices  
 $\frac{1}{2}$  cup vanilla yogurt  
 $\frac{1}{3}$  cup peanut butter



### **Directions**

1. Prepare fruit by washing and slicing.
2. Arrange fruit on a plate around a small bowl.
3. To make dip, combine yogurt and peanut butter in a small bowl.
4. Mix well.
5. Chill dip in refrigerator until ready to serve.

**Note:** You can use any washed fruit. Ask me to help wash and arrange the fruits on a plate.

## Sure fire foods I'll (your picky eater) love!



### Frozen Fruits

Slightly softened blueberries, or other cut-up fruits, are a fun and healthy treat for me.

### More Finger Foods

I like my foods cut up into small pieces. These are some ideas for me: cooked sweet potato cubes, tiny pieces of cheese, toast squares with peanut butter, or mild salsa with a quesadilla.



## Things other moms say their picky eater likes!

- Mashed avocado on toast triangles or crackers
- Chopped olives and cream cheese spread on celery when I'm older, or on soft bread when I'm younger
- Graham crackers with peanut butter, along with a tangerine
- Applesauce and yogurt sprinkled with cinnamon
- Stir-fried broccoli—sauté little florets and salt lightly
- Low-sodium tomato soup and whole grain crackers
- Washed spinach leaves to dip in a favorite dressing

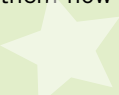


**Children under age 4 can choke on popcorn, nuts, fruit skins, dried fruit, and raw vegetables.**



### Patience works better than pressure.

Offer your children new foods. Then, let them choose how much to eat. Kids are more likely to enjoy new foods when eating them is their own choice. It also teaches them how to be independent.





## Make meals and memories together.

- Have at least one food I like at each meal, along with other foods.
- Let me help with meals. I like to eat foods that I help to make.
- I love to choose! Offer me two choices and let me pick one!

### Classic Homemade Macaroni and Cheese

2 cups whole wheat macaroni  
1/2 cup onions, chopped  
2 cups evaporated fat-free milk  
1 medium egg, beaten  
1/4 teaspoon black pepper  
1 1/4 cups low-fat cheddar cheese, finely shredded  
Nonstick cooking spray, as needed



1. Cook macaroni according to directions—but do not add salt to the cooking water. Drain and set aside.
2. Spray casserole dish with nonstick cooking spray.
3. Preheat oven to 350°F.
4. Lightly spray saucepan with nonstick cooking spray. Add onions to saucepan and sauté for about 3 minutes.
5. In another bowl, combine cooked macaroni, onions, and the rest of the ingredients and mix thoroughly.
6. Transfer mixture into casserole dish.
7. Bake for 25 minutes or until bubbly. Let stand for 10 minutes before serving.



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