



YOUNG CHILDREN EATING IDEAS & NUTRITION



CONCEPTS

- Age 2-3 most children find their food preferences that do not change but studies have shown that repeated exposure to foods by tasting, touching, smelling can transform their preferences. This is a natural response in children
- In the beginning stages of toddlerhood, pickiness is more commonly an issue of control. These little people are beginning to show their independence. Which food goes into their mouth is something they can control. We can control what is served.
- They will eat when they are hungry - even if adults feel they are not eating "enough". They will often stop eating when they have the feeling of being full. Allow them to do so.
- Children under 5 lack enzymes to break down vegetables into vitamins. Don't worry about your child not liking vegetables.

WHAT YOU CAN DO

- Make mealtime enjoyable. Don't create stress or feel stressed if they do not eat or only have a couple of bites. Enjoy meals together, even if it is just them playing at the table but being engaged with you.
- When you give them their meal, give them a small amount of food they like and a small amount of "new" food.
- Offer "dipping sauces" like mustard, ketchup, no sugar BBQ sauce, etc for them to dip an item they don't like.
- Allow them to help make the food - as much as possible. Have them help with setting up and clean up. Wash veggies.
- Give them control of being able to help "serve" themselves just as they see you doing
- Make it a "game"
 - I wonder what noise this food makes when we bite it
 - Oh, these tomatoes are yellow, not red; I wonder if they taste different let's try it
 - This leaf feels soft; here, feel it. What does it feel like on our tongue?
 - "This meatloaf will help you see better in the dark, jump higher, run faster, and think quicker!"

WHAT YOU CAN DO

- Offer food up to 15 times (15 meals/snacks) by allowing them to touch, feel, taste, and smell it. If they don't like a food, you can leave it open to trying later down the road by saying, "your taste buds must not be ready yet for that food." Try again in a few weeks or months to see whether their taste buds have "matured" and tell them, "did you know your taste buds changed? Let's try this and see if we like it now."
- Don't make dessert a reward. You can offer a healthy "dessert" in a small portion with food such as fruits, yogurt, a small amount of maple syrup, etc.
- Offer water at snack times instead of milk can help reduce the filling-up for dinner. You can also offer bone broth with salt and some seasonings or kombucha. Avoid store-bought fruit juices - pressed juices are fine in moderation.
- Make food look fun - Cut shapes out, and have different dishes to eat from. "Try eating the carrots out of this cup! Look, you can carry it around too". You can always put hummus or dips in the bottom of the cup and add them on top the vegetables to see if they would like the idea of carrying their food with them.
- Play around with textures. If they don't like a scrambled egg - try an over-easy egg and have them puncture the yolk and try it.
- Don't overwhelm younger children with too many choices or too many of an item.
- Leave a small amount of food out on a reachable table throughout the day - include items you know they like and new items if intake is a concern.
- Drink it! Blend in vegetables into a smoothie, add in healthy fats such as flaxseed, cod-liver oil can be added and most of the time disguised into food.
- Use butter as much as possible for healthy fats! Healthy fats are key for brain development. About 6 tablespoons a day.

