



Tips to Help Your Picky Eater

APR. 14, 2026



For Everyone

KEY POINTS

- Good nutrition is important for young children to help them grow healthy and strong.
- Try these tips to help children enjoy new food.



Why it matters

Good nutrition is important for young children to help them grow healthy and strong. Children need a variety of nutrient-dense foods each day for healthy growth and brain development. Early eating experiences can also affect how people eat as they get older. This is why it is important to introduce young children to healthy foods, including a variety of fruits and vegetables.

Follow these tips to help your picky eater try new foods.

Try different approaches

- Try eating the food first to show them you like it. Then, let them try it.
- Make funny faces with the foods on their plate. It may help them get excited to eat it.
- Give them a choice of different foods to try. Let them decide which one to try today.
- Serve new foods with foods you know they like.
- Try freezing small bites of leftover foods. You can thaw these later and avoid throwing away food.
- Wait a couple of days before offering the food again. It may take 8 to 10 exposures before a young child is willing to try a new food.

As children get older, they may start refusing foods they used to like or start showing signs of being a picky eater. Favoring just a couple of foods or not wanting foods to touch each other on the plate are normal behaviors. These behaviors often go away by the time the child is about 5 years old.

Children may need to try some foods many times.



Children may not like every food you give them on the first try. Give them a chance to try foods again and again, even if they don't like them at first. Children may need to try some foods many times before they like them.

Try a variety of tastes and textures

Giving your child foods with a variety of different [tastes and textures](#) can help them learn to accept and like a variety of foods. You can let your child try a variety of textures including:

- Smooth (strained or pureed).

- Mashed or lumpy.
- Finely chopped or ground.

Start with smooth or mashed foods first and then move toward finely chopped or ground foods as they get older. This can help your child develop chewing skills, as well as fine motor skills like pinching and picking up food with their fingers. Be sure to offer foods in the right size, consistency, and shape for your child's age and development to help prevent choking.

Keep it fun!

Try these playful activities to keep your picky eater engaged and open to new tastes and textures.



Keep fruit and vegetables on the kitchen counter or where children can see them as a reminder of healthy snacks.



Allow kids to touch and smell their food to spark interest and improve comfort with new foods during meal time.

03 picky eater activity
LET'S PLAY

Funny Face

Arrange fruits and vegetables into a funny face.



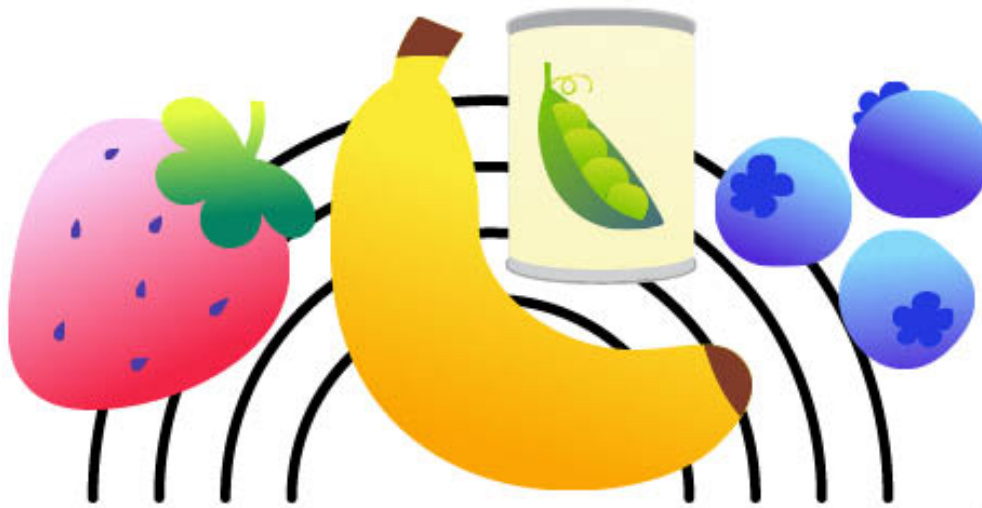
ACTIVITY
03

Make funny faces with the foods on your child's plate. It might help your child get excited to eat it.

04 picky eater activity
LET'S PLAY

Rainbow

Make a rainbow with fruits and vegetables.



ACTIVITY
04

Offer a rainbow of colors with different fruits and vegetables for snacks and meals.



Serve water instead of sugary drinks. Add berries, lemons, limes, or cucumbers to give water more color and flavor.



Involve kids in making healthy snacks and meals.

Even the youngest can help by washing and sorting foods. Encourage your child to use 3 of their 5 senses (smell, touch, taste) as you prepare food. Prepare the same fruit or vegetable in different ways.

Developed with the CDC Foundation.

Resources

- [Picky Eaters and What to Do](#)
- CDC's [Infant and Toddler Nutrition page](#)
- [Signs Your Child is Hungry or Full](#)

- [Good Nutrition Starts Early](#)
- American Academy of Pediatrics' video: [Tips for Feeding Picky Eaters](#)

SOURCES AND PAGE INFO

CONTENT SOURCE:

[National Center for Chronic Disease Prevention and Health Promotion \(NCCDPHP\)](#)

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