Tips for "Picky Eating"

by Nimali Fernando, MD, MPH

Here are 8 tips for preschool and young school-aged kids who are hesitant to try new foods. Scan to watch the video of Dr. Yum's tips, too!

1. **Resist the urge to call your child a "picky eater":** Try using more positive words like "learning eater," "exploring eater" or "practicing eater" when speaking about their eating habits in front of them.
2. **Try, Try Again**: It may take 10-15, or more tries to develop a taste for new foods. That's a lot of tries, so don't give up! Use the "yum score" from doctoryum.org to help teach children to "practice" food just like they practice other skills. Provide encouragement that as they try, food will get more yummy.
3. **Try small tasting bites on the premolars:** When kids chomp on those "dinosaur" teeth they are less likely to gag. Keep bites the size of a fingertip at first.
4. **Offer a swish of water:** If your child is sensitive to new tastes, keep a cup of water with a straw to swish down a tasting bite.
5. **Cook with kids:** Regular cooking experiences help kids get more familiar with new foods using other senses and can lead to trying and enjoying foods down the road.
6. **Limit snacking:** When kids are full of snacks, they are less likely to try new foods. Make sure to leave at least 1-2 hours between meals and snacks to let hunger develop.
7. **Limit favorite foods:** When offering a variety of foods, make sure there is a food choice on the plate they sometimes like, along with new foods that they are learning to like. But when we always put only their very favorite foods on the plate, kids are less likely to explore. Rotate favorite foods off the plate to encourage trying.
8. **Don't hide veggies:** It's okay to "pack" veggies into smoothies, sauces, eggs, pasta, meatballs, etc. But also keep veggies on the plate in plain sight so kids get used to seeing them and eventually become comfortable enough to try them.



Download the Yum Score!



Dr. Yum's Home Edition Kitchen Classroom

learn more at DoctorYum.org

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