

HEALTHY CHOICES

START NOW



When your Child is a Picky Eater

Feeding children can be a challenge for parents and caregivers. The amount of food a child eats will vary from day to day and meal to meal, depending on their appetite, activity level and whether they are experiencing a growth spurt.

What to Expect:

- After the first year of life, growth slows down and your child may eat less food.
- It's normal for a child to eat very well one day, and very little the next.
- Refusing to eat can be a child's way of taking some control of his life and may have little to do with the actual food that is offered.
- A young child may not be happy sitting at the table for longer than 15 to 20 minutes at a time.



Here are some strategies to help your child eat well:

Offer regularly scheduled meals and snacks - Set regular times for eating, so your child knows when food is available and can develop an appetite in between. Young children need three meals and two to three snacks each day.

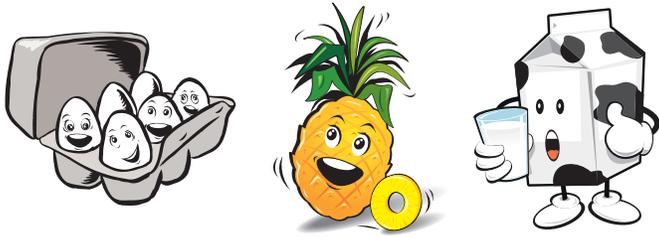
Make every bite count - provide nutritious meals and snacks – Meals should include foods from at least

three of the four food groups from Canada's Food Guide. Snacks should always include foods from at least two food groups.

Respect tiny tummies - Keep portion sizes small. Your child may not even try a bite if the portion looks too big. Your child should feel confident that more food is available if she still has an appetite after finishing the portion.

Understand that you and your child each have a job to do - It's up to you to provide healthy foods. It's up to your child to decide whether or not to eat and how much to eat.

Trust your child to know how much to eat - Don't be concerned with how much your child eats. Over time, the variations in the amount a child eats tends to average out to provide the calories and nutrients they need.



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Here are some strategies to help your child eat well:

Limit juice and milk - Children sometimes fill up on juice or milk during or between meals. Limit milk to 500 ml (2 cups) and limit juice to 125 ml (half a cup) a day, preferably served with meals/snacks. Offer water at other times for thirst.



Don't be a "short order cook" - Serve one meal for everyone, including at least one food at each meal that your child enjoys. The more you cater to your child's likes and dislikes, the pickier your child will become.

Do not force or bribe your child to eat - If you force or bribe your child to eat, they will tend to like those foods less. A healthy relationship with food in the long term is more important than eating a certain food now. Do not use food to bribe, praise, reward or punish your child.



Offer new foods over and over again - If a food is not eaten, try again without pressure, on another day. Children may need to try a new food 15 or 20 times before they will accept it. If you permit your child to say "no" to a food, it helps them to feel free to say "yes" more often. Allow your child to politely spit out food they don't like.

Include your child with meal and snack preparation - Your child is more likely to eat when he has participated in the preparation. Young children can help wash and tear lettuce, scrub potatoes or stir batter.

Eat together as a family - Mealtime should be quality family time with positive conversation and good food. Avoid distractions such as toys, having the television on or taking phone calls.

Model healthy eating - Children learn by watching their parents and caregivers. If you enjoy a variety of foods, your child may decide they are worth trying. If you avoid a food, your child may not want to try it either.

REMEMBER!

A relaxed approach to food is the best way to cope with your child's eating behaviors.



If you and your child struggle with feeding issues and/or your child is not growing or developing normally, call the Healthy Children Info Line to talk with a Public Health Nurse at 519-883-2245. TTY: 519-883-2427.