



There's a Picky Eater at Home

Feeding Responsibilities

It is important to understand the parent's role and the toddler's role during mealtime. Parents and caregivers need to offer nutritious foods. Toddlers decide what to eat from those food choices presented by the parent and how much to eat.

Here are four important feeding jobs for parents:

1. Buy **healthful** foods.
2. Serve **regular** meals and snacks.
3. Make mealtimes **pleasant**.
4. Set a **good** example.



New Foods

Many times toddlers will rely on favorite foods that they feel comfortable eating. They may refuse to try new foods. Toddlers, picky eaters included, need to expand their food choices, and this can be accomplished gradually.

- Offer a new food together with a favorite food.
- Bring new foods in slowly, one at a time.
- Offer new foods at the beginning of the meal because that's when toddlers are most hungry.
- Arrange them nicely on the plate so they are appealing to the toddler.
- Serve small portions the first few times — it is less intimidating than a full plate.
- Encourage toddlers to taste at least one bite, but do not force them.

A toddler should not be bribed to try new foods or even to eat a meal. Offering her a dessert if she tries the new food sends the message that dessert is more important than the food. Parents need to promote the social aspect of mealtime and positive eating behaviors.

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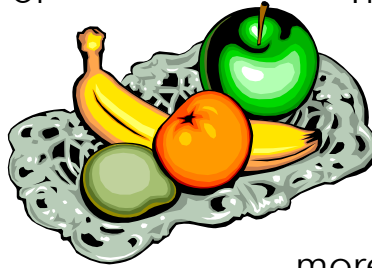
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Tips for Getting Your Toddler to Eat Better

- **Serve foods that appeal to kids.** Include a variety of colors, textures, and forms.

- Combination of colors makes meals more attractive.
- Offer meals that combine foods that are crunchy or crispy and foods that are soft.
- Cut foods into interesting shapes.



- **Offer plain, unmixed foods.** Some toddlers prefer to eat foods separately instead of all together in a dish.
- Encourage toddlers to **practice serving themselves.** They can try pouring water or milk, spreading peanut butter on bread, or spooning food from a serving bowl to their plate.

- Give kids enough **time to eat.** They are less skilled at eating by themselves.

- **Involve your toddler** in food shopping and preparation. Toddlers are more willing to try new foods they helped prepare.
- Allow **hot foods to cool down** and **cold foods to warm up** before offering it to your toddler.
- **Make eating and family time the focus** of mealtime. This is a good opportunity for the family to talk about the highlights of the day or future plans for family activities. Make mealtime conversation pleasant.

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