

How to help your picky eater

Good nutrition affects a child's energy, mood, and overall health and development. To ensure children eat a balanced diet, it's important that parents learn how to deal with picky eaters in an effective and positive way.



Up to 22% of school age children are picky eaters

Picky or "selective" eaters may only eat a narrow range of foods, sometimes avoiding entire food groups or rejecting specific items based on taste, color or texture.

Managing picky eaters

Do not give up on new foods.

It may take 10 to 15 attempts before your child accepts a new food.

Prepare food together.

Kids are more likely to eat something they helped make.

Cut foods into fun shapes

and present different colored fruits and vegetables.

Eat meals as a family

and model healthy eating.

Do not force them to eat.

Try serving small portions to avoid overwhelming them.

Avoid unhealthy snacks, even as rewards.

Limit juices to 4–6 oz./day.

Too many drinks during the day can decrease a child's appetite at mealtime.

A balanced diet

Children between the ages of 4 and 13 should typically consume:

Whole fruits (raw, cooked or dried): 1–1.5 cups/day

Vegetables (fresh, frozen or canned): 1.5–2 cups/day

Grains (bread, rice, pasta, cereal): 4–5 oz./day

Protein (meat/poultry, beans, peas, seafood, nuts, seeds, eggs): 3–5 oz./day

Dairy (low-fat or fat-free milk, yogurt or cheese): 2.5–3 cups/day

When to seek help

If you are worried about your child's eating habits or overall health, consult your pediatrician during your routine well-child visits. **However, if your child is underweight, shows persistent vomiting or diarrhea, or chokes and coughs when eating, schedule a pediatric visit immediately.**

