

Food Fights!



The helpful guide handling picky eaters!

Division of Responsibilities

Parents are responsible for **what** food is provided, **when** and **where** its provided

Children are responsible for **how much** they eat or **whether** they eat at all

Make Food Fun!

Creative names can pique a child's interest (e.g., X-ray carrots, Big Bad Bandit Beans, Celery Swords, Crazy Kale)

Get kids involved! There are age-appropriate steps to any meal like washing produce, tear lettuce leaves, knead and shape dough, shake liquids together, mix or pour ingredients, set the table, etc.

Cut foods into fun shapes or playful characters (cookie cutters make fun shapes), smaller pieces are more manageable, and kids will be drawn to the plate.

Why Worry About TV?

- **Kids are swayed to choose foods advertised on their favorites shows** and most ads feature foods high in fat, added sugars, sodium, and/or calories while lacking in vitamins, minerals, and fiber
 - 90% (or more) of ads on kids shows are high in ingredients should be limited in kid's diets
- **Tips:** avoid watching TV while eating, watch programs without ads, let kids help in the kitchen, set limits on screen time, and be a good role model with electronics

Introducing New Foods

"How can we make it better?" kids may not like one aspect of a meal (too hot or cold, creamy, plain, crunchy, etc.). Try this quick question to remedy small issues!

Serve new foods in small amounts with familiar items, when child is hungry and healthy, and cooked in different ways. It may take 8-10 tastes before a child likes/accepts a new food!

6 Tips for Better Mealtimes

- ✓ **Regularly Scheduled Meals & Snacks**
 - Structure meal and snack times and take the time to eat with kids!
 - 'Close the kitchen' by only allowing water between meals/snacks
- ✓ **Avoid Pressuring Kids to Eat**
 - Kids may eat them but like foods *less* if they are forced
- ✓ **Model Positive Habits**
 - Kids develop healthy eating habits and behaviors by watching their parents
- ✓ **Enjoy Healthy Foods**
 - Serve healthy foods regularly, in a variety of ways.
 - Talk about how good they taste and how they make you strong and smart
- ✓ **Create a Relaxed Atmosphere**
 - Minimal distraction is key: turn off the TV and handheld devices.
- ✓ **Have Realistic Expectations**
 - It takes time for kids to master new skills. Set clear expectations and reinforce successes

Try This



Not That

Use Non-food Rewards like extra reading time or a later bedtime to help kids taste a new food but be relaxed about whether they respond, change takes time!

Determine the right amount and place for indulgent foods: reserve a spot for indulgent foods and let kids understand when they can expect them.

Serve 1 or 2 "safe" items with each meal, make slight modifications to liked foods to nudge some small changes

Draw attention to food: use colorful dishes and utensils, play soft music in the background, turn off screens and focus on eating together

Food Rewards: Children may place high value on unhealthy foods (sweets and treats) rather than the healthy foods. This sabotages your efforts!

Food Restriction: kids are drawn to the foods they cannot have, overeat, show a lack of control

Catering to a child's preferences: Making a backup meal or simply different than the rest of the family lets the child be in charge, limits their diet, and become entrenched

Using devices while eating: kids mindlessly eat without learning satiety cues and may see ads for unhealthy foods

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