Food Fights! The helpful guide handling picky eaters!

**Division of Responsibilities**

**Parents** are responsible for what food is provided, when and where it's provided.

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

**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.

**Make Food Fun!**

**Creative names can pique a child’s interest** (e.g., X-ray carrots, Big Bad Bandit Beans, Celery Swords, Krazy 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.

**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
  o Structure meal and snack times and take the time to eat with kids!
  o ‘Close the kitchen’ by only allowing water between meals/snacks

✓ Avoid Pressuring Kids to Eat
  o Kids may eat them but like foods less if they are forced

✓ Model Positive Habits
  o Kids develop healthy eating habits and behaviors by watching their parents

✓ Enjoy Healthy Foods
  o Serve healthy foods regularly, in a variety of ways.
  o Talk about how good they taste and how they make you strong and smart

✓ Create a Relaxed Atmosphere
  o Minimal distraction is key: turn off the TV and handheld devices.

✓ Have Realistic Expectations
  o It takes time for kids to master new skills. Set clear expectations and reinforce successes

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Try This

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

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Not That

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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