



▶ Try serving foods alongside foods your child has already established as a "liked" food. Serving foods they are not familiar with may cause discouragement.



# PICKY EATERS VERSES PROBLEM FEEDERS

## Know the difference and how you can help.

Mealtime with young children can be challenging! Some children go through phases where they will avoid or refuse certain foods. Balanced nutrition is important in a child's health and development. Poor nutrition has a drastic affect on their behavior and ability to learn and grow.

When engaging in mealtimes with young children, it can be hard to know if your child is a picky eater or if there is a true feeding problem that is limiting your child's diet. Here are some key differences between picky eaters and true problem feeders.

### PICKY EATERS

- Eat at least a few fruits/ vegetables, carbs and proteins.
- Can be coaxed to try new foods.
- Will usually eat foods similar to preferred foods (ie: will eat a variety of chicken nuggets or pizza).
- Sometimes eats foods that are different than the rest of the family.
- Will suddenly refuse a food they have preferred but will eat it again in the future.
- Eats at least one food from most food textures (ie: crunchy, chewy, soft, slimy).
- Can manage new food on their plate and will taste it or touch with encouragement.

### WHAT CAN I DO ABOUT PICKY EATING?

- Limit snacks and try serving meals at a consistent time each day. Picky eating can occur if a child fills up on snacks and is not hungry by mealtime.
- Serve new foods with familiar foods your child already likes. Let them explore their food through touch, smell, and small bites.
- Do not bribe or force your child to try a new food. Simply serve small portions of it along with familiar foods, and your child may come around and try it.
- Offer opportunities for your child to interact with foods outside of mealtimes (ie: making food prints with paint and vegetables, participating in cooking/baking).
- Offer your child choices in other areas of their life. Allow them to feel like they can choose and gain control of more than just what they eat (ie: Do you want to wear the red shirt or blue shirt? Do you want to go on a walk or ride your bike?)

### PROBLEM FEEDERS

- Eats less than 20 foods.
- Gags or vomits at the smell/taste of foods.
- May become emotionally upset when they are encouraged to interact with non preferred foods.

- Refuses large categories of foods/textures.
- Insists on foods being prepared in specific ways or will only eat a specific food brands.
- Almost always eats different foods than the rest of the family.
- Will suddenly refuse a preferred food and never eat it again.

### WHAT CAN I DO ABOUT PROBLEM FEEDING?

If you suspect that your child has feeding difficulties beyond picky eating, keep a food journal to track their eating behavior, and bring your observations to your child's doctor or pediatric occupational or speech therapist. They can help your child discover new and healthy foods and improve their overall nutrition.



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