

# Food Fact Sheet

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## How to Please the Picky Eater

Almost as soon as the words, "time to eat" are uttered, a child will usually respond, "I don't like it." Sound familiar? Don't worry. Whether your child has a repertoire of only four foods, or becomes easily bored with the same old choices, there is hope.

**Tackling Testy Taste Buds:** To tempt the taste buds of the choosiest eater, consider these pointers:

1. **Variety and Quality over Quantity** Go for a variety of quality foods instead of worrying about how much a child eats. The best time to try something new is at the beginning of mealtime when the child is most hungry. It's easy to find something to please even the pickiest palate. Try cooked pasta in fun corkscrew shapes, wagon wheels or interesting colors. Cereal make a good meal anytime and children love to eat it dry as a snack. Wrap anything in a wheat tortilla, and children are more likely to eat it.
2. **Get Creative** If your toddler loves cereal, try mixing pureed fruits or vegetables in with it. While this may sound awful to us, it may be the only way to get your youngster to gobble up vitamin-rich vegetables, bread, pretzels, bagels and fruit. You can make a variety of dips from cheese, pureed fruits, vegetables, meat, peanut butter and yogurt.
3. **Snacking** Even if mealtimes are tense, sooner or later fussy eaters get hungry. Think of snack time as a mini-mealtime. Keep plenty of grain foods, fruits and vegetables handy for quick snacking. Because children have high energy needs and small appetites, snacks are important for getting enough fuel. Applesauce, cookies, crackers, pretzels, fruit, vegetables, cheese, graham crackers, cereal, vanilla wafers, toast and even pasta leftovers make great snacks.
4. **Make Mealtime Fun** When children are old enough find ways for them to participate in meal preparation. Children who love most vegetables, but turn their noses up at vegetable soup may have a change of heart when they help clean the vegetables and see what actually goes into the soup. Add familiar shapes of pasta to the soup to increase carbohydrates.

Yes, you can play with your food. Have children draw a face on top of a casserole with strips of cheese, tater tots or vegetables. Have them write their names or draw a face on sandwiches or toast with ketchup, mustard, jelly or honey. Use cookie-cutters to tell a story while children make sandwiches out of the shapes.

Pass it on. Teach your children good eating habits, and you'll give them a head start on a lifetime of good health. This doesn't mean a strict regimen of avoiding certain foods. Remember, there are no good foods or bad foods. Healthy eaters enjoy all foods in moderation, including cookies, cakes or other desserts!