

# PICKY EATER

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## "IS MY KID A PICKY EATER?"

DESPITE POPULAR BELIEF MOST KIDS ARE NOT PICKY EATERS. CHILDREN ARE ALLOWED TO REFUSE FOODS THEY DO NOT WANT JUST AS ADULTS ARE. MOST KIDS GO THROUGH SOME DEGREE OF FEEDING DIFFICULTY BUT EAT ENOUGH VARIETY THROUGHOUT THE WEEK.

## PICKY VS FUSSY

BY NOEMY JORGE MS, RD, CDN

We all have our preferences. Some foods we love, like, tolerate, dislike and would never touch and our preferences change with experience, age, and region. It is common for most kids to go through a selective phase just like adults. One study found 25-50% of children exhibit some degree of feeding difficulty. However few children are considered true "selective or choosy eaters". Most children get enough variety of food throughout the week.

True "picky eaters" are selective about what foods they eat, reluctant to try new foods and refuse to even sample new foods. There may be some texture, taste, smell, color, or temperature they may be averse to.

Very different from a child who is being fussy by refusing a food one day but eat it another day,

# CREATE A PLEASANT MEAL ENVIRONMENT

If you are worried about your child getting enough variety of foods try these tools to help you.

1. **Keep a food journal or calendar.** Children usually eat enough variety throughout the week. Keeping a record of what your child eats and how much can help you determine if there are any gaps and which food groups you may need to focus more on. Feel at ease knowing your child eats a few different foods in each of the 5 food groups.

2. **Set the example.** Kids imitate everything we do including our eating habits. The more variety you have in your diet the easier it will be to teach your child how to nourish themselves.

3. **Try new recipes.** We all get tired of the same things, switch it up, get excited, have some cultural explorations, create fun shapes and cookie cutters. Allow them to play with their food occasionally. Make it fun!

4. **Include the kids.** Children love to help in the kitchen, go grocery shopping, and pick the menu. They can pretend to be chef's, waiters, Mommy's, and Daddy's, and it opens an opportunity to teach them about colors, nutrition, agriculture, cooking, culture, and family. Allow them to choose which fruits and vegetables they want to eat this week, this meal or snack.

5. **Family Mealtimes.** If you can create this lovely family tradition in your home you will find deeper connections with your loved ones, create happy memories and healthy habits in children. This brings the focus on food, gives everyone the ability to really taste, smell, observe, and feel the food as well as pay attention to our hunger and satiety cues. Avoid fights or arguments during this time. Don't be upset if someone is not eating as much as you'd like, they will likely eat more the next day or the following.



## IS MY CHILD EATING ENOUGH?

MOST PARENTS OVERESTIMATE HOW MUCH CHILDREN SHOULD EAT. UNTIL THE AGE OF 5 Y/O CHILDREN NEED ONLY 2-3 BITES OF MOST FOODS. ENCOURAGE VARIETY BY LIMITING THE FOODS YOU KNOW YOUR CHILD LOVES.

LIMIT MILK TO 4-6 OUNCES 2-3X PER DAY.

LIMIT JUICE TO 4 OUNCES PER DAY.