

Eat Right

Food, Nutrition and Health Tips from Kids Eat Right

Feeding “Picky Eater” Preschoolers

For Parents and Childcare Providers of “Picky Eater” Preschoolers

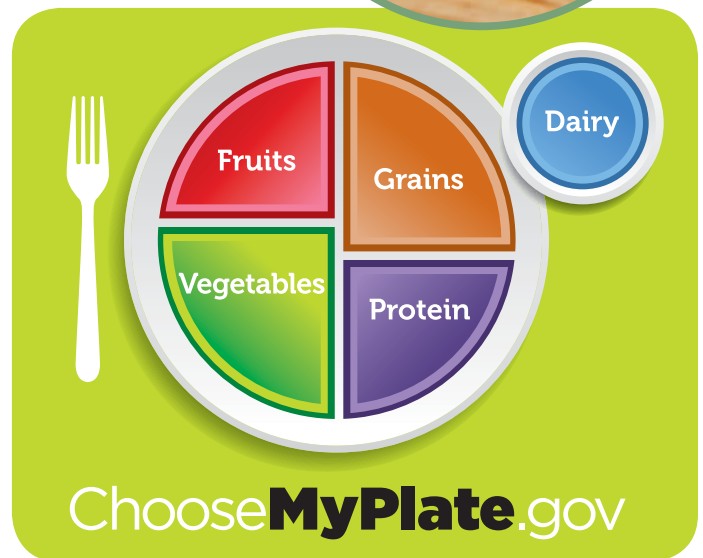


Eliminate “Picky” Eaters!

Preschool children can seem like “picky” eaters. It can take offering preschoolers a food several times before they will try it.^{1,2} This is normal. Do not label your preschooler as a “picky eater.”¹ Here are some tips to get preschoolers interested in trying new foods.

Tips:

- **In the kitchen:** Children involved in preparing foods may be more willing to try (and like!) them.¹ Keep a small stool or chair handy so that you can teach preschoolers to:
 - Wash produce
 - Stir foods
 - Arrange fresh fruit and veggie platters
- **At the table:** Relax!
 - Do not force preschoolers to eat^{1,3}
 - Offer new foods first, when preschoolers are hungry²
 - Encourage preschoolers to serve themselves¹
 - Keep conversations positive¹
 - Enjoy mealtime together¹
- **At the grocery store:** Have fun!
 - Ask your preschooler to pick out a few fruits and vegetables to try like peaches, cantaloupe, kiwi, or sweet potatoes
 - While you are at the store, ask the produce manager to tell you about the produce that is in season
- **Outdoors:** Children love to grow their own food—whether it is in a garden or in a pot. Help preschoolers:
 - Plant vegetables
 - Pick vegetables
 - Wash vegetables
 - Put vegetables on the table



Serve it Up Special

Most children do not eat enough of the five food groups: grains, fruits, vegetables, protein, and dairy.⁴ Use these tips to help “picky eater” preschoolers enjoy trying new foods, in a creative way!

- **In a dish:** Add vegetables to your favorite foods.
 - Make a veggie pizza
 - Add veggies to pastas, soups, tacos, sandwiches, and stir-frys
- **In a beverage:** Smoothies are a fun way to get nutrients from the dairy and fruit groups.
 - Blend frozen fruit, 100% juice and low fat or fat free yogurt
 - Experiment with different fruit and yogurt flavors
- **In a topper:** Preschoolers love to serve themselves. Encourage preschoolers to:
 - Top off cereal or oatmeal with strawberries, blueberries or bananas

- Load a baked potato full of the good stuff, like plain yogurt with steamed broccoli and cauliflower
- Top a corn tortilla with cheese, lettuce, and tomato
- Sprinkle granola over yogurt
- **In a salad:** Make a colorful salad.
 - Add beans like kidney beans or garbanzo beans
 - Sprinkle with low-fat cheese
 - Add fruit like mandarin oranges or pineapple for a sweet twist
- **In a shape:** Preschoolers enjoy foods in fun shapes. Get creative and have some fun!
 - Cut whole wheat bread with a cookie-cutter
 - Arrange fruits on a plate in a smiley face
 - Make a sailboat out of cheese wedges and crackers

Popular Preschool Snacks

Plan 1–2 small, healthy snacks in-between meals every day. Preschoolers usually need to eat every two to three hours.^{1,3} Offer different snacks every day. Make a grocery list of a variety of healthy and yummy snacks, like these!

Tips:

- **In the cupboard:** Keep a stash of healthy snacks in the cupboard.
 - Fruit cups
 - Whole wheat crackers
 - Whole wheat mini bagel
 - Whole wheat tortilla
 - Whole grain cereal
 - Dried fruit
 - 100% fruit leather
 - Peanut butter or other nut butter
- **In the fridge:** Store ready-to-eat healthy snacks in the fridge.
 - Cheese sticks
 - Yogurt cups

Prevent Choking¹

Children under four should not eat these foods:

- Popcorn
- Nuts
- Seeds
- Chunks of meat or poultry
- Any hard, small, whole foods such as cherry tomatoes, apples, grapes, hard candy, and jelly beans

Tips:

- Chop, grapes, meat, poultry, cooked hot dogs and raw fruits and vegetables in small pieces
- Cook hard vegetables

From www.eatright.org

- Low-fat pudding
- Chocolate fat-free milk
- Hard-boiled egg
- Washed produce, like strawberries or diced watermelon
- Canned fruit in its own juice or 100% natural applesauce
- Hummus or other bean dip
- Sliced strips of lean meat or poultry
- **In the freezer:** Keep special (but still healthy!) treats here.
 - 100% fruit bars
 - Low fat frozen yogurt cups

...and the best tip of all:

Be a healthy role model!^{1,2} Make sure children see you eating healthy foods and being physically active!

Check out more helpful tips from **Kids Eat Right** and **Let's Move!** at www.kidseatright.org and www.letsmove.gov.

References:

1. Larson Duyff R, *Complete Food and Nutrition Guide*. Hoboken, New Jersey: American Dietetic Association; 2012: 447–459.
2. MyPlate Picky Eating page. Choose MyPlate Web site. <http://www.choosemyplate.gov/preschoolers/picky-eaters/new-foods.html>. Accessed September 16, 2013.
3. AAP Preschooler-Food and Feeding page. American Academy of Pediatrics Web site. <http://www.aap.org/en-us/advocacy-and-policy/aap-health-initiatives/HALF-Implementation-Guide/Age-Specific-Content/Pages/Preschool-Food-and-Feeding.aspx#none>. Accessed September 16, 2013.
4. *Dietary Guidelines for Americans 2010*. Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Agriculture, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services; 2010: 35–42.

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