

"My Child is a Picky Eater"

What leads to picky eating? In the first 6 months of life a baby's food comes from one source and has one taste, one smell, and one texture. Feeding is a comfortable, safe place centered around "one on one" time with the caregiver. When new foods get introduced, it can be scary for your little one. Eating starts to evolve into a new process that involves new tastes, smells, textures, and eating environments.

As babies go through the process of learning to walk, we know there are stages involving discovery, as well as trial and error. So should learning to eat. When we control what, when, and how much babies eat, they experience a loss of control of their situations. Food exploration is normal and very important to baby's brain development. Encouraging children to try new foods requires phenomenal patience! But introducing one new food at a time may help reduce the incidence of picky eating.



None of us want the claim to fame of having a picky eater. And we worry about potential linked **nutritional deficiencies and eating disorders**. Fortunately, there are many studies that provide guidance for concerned parents.

Ellyn Satter's Division of Responsibility:

Parents offer structure, support and opportunities. Children choose how much and whether to eat **from what the parents provide**.

For Toddlers through Adolescents:

- The parent is responsible for what, when, and where the child eats
- The child is responsible for how much and whether or not to eat

Parents Feeding Jobs:

- Choose and prepare the food
- Provide regular meals and snacks
- Make eating times pleasant
- Don't let children graze for food or beverages between meal and snack times

It is fundamentally the parent's job to trust the child and his or her decision about how much, and whether or not to eat. It's comforting to know that if parents do their job with feeding, children will do their job with eating.



Other helpful tips:

- Pair unfamiliar with familiar foods.
- Let them pick and choose from what is put on the table, even if it's not a wide variety.
- Let them be involved in making the meal. This will peak their interest in the new food.
- Make meal times a pleasure and a privilege not a chore.
- Try these **fun recipes for picky eaters!**