

# PICKY EATERS

## KIDS NUTRITION

Most parents would probably agree that mealtimes with kids can be... challenging.

Your child may be a “picky” eater or need special routines at meals. There are many reasons why children choose to limit or refuse food. Understanding why your child limits his or her food can help to find the best solution or deal with it.

### TIPS TO INCREASE FOOD INTAKE

- Offer many different foods, especially fruits and vegetables.
- Offer new foods along with foods your child already likes to eat.
- Don't give up if your child won't try foods the first few times they are offered. Many children need to be offered a new food several times before they will eat it.
- Provide regularly scheduled meals and snacks—young children need three small meals and two or three snacks each day.
- Keep mealtime routines constant. Use the same plates and utensils. Eat at the same place and at the same time.
- Eat together as a family as often as possible.
- Avoid using food as a reward or for behavior management.

### TIPS BEFORE MEAL TIME

- Children who do not like changes or need to think about changes need more time to warm up to the idea of eating. Give them 5 to 10-minute warnings before meals. Stop activities well before meal or snack time and ask them to help you prepare the food or set the table.
- Encourage your child to help plan meals and grocery shop. Respecting your child's opinion helps to reduce power struggles. Build a balance between healthful foods and drinks, and those that are just for fun.
- Allow your child to choose between two options already approved by you. For example: “Do you want a grilled cheese or tuna sandwich for lunch today?”
- Let your child help cook dinner. Even a 3-year-old can add snap beans or toss a salad and stir the batter.

One last piece of advice is to disconnect from technology at least fifteen minutes before meal time. Make time for meals. Set an example for the kids and show them that meal time is sacred and should be done together as a family.