All you ever wanted to know about Picky Eating
About

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- Former early childhood educator
- Creator of Nourish the Littles: online platform that offers nutrition education and resources for parents.
- Avid cook, adventurous eater, lover of all seafood
1. Very careful about choosing or accepting things. "Fussy," "choosy"

2. “Picky eaters” are characterized as unwilling to accept new foods and even familiar foods, as well as having strong food preferences.

3. Avoidant/Restrictive Food Intake Disorder (ARFID): Individuals who severely restrict how much food they eat, approximately 10 foods or fewer.
What IS picky eating?

4. Parent’s definition of picky eating: “My child won’t eat vegetables or healthy foods.”

5. Picky eating is developmentally appropriate between the ages of 24 months to 4 years old.

What CAUSES picky eating?

1. Emotional/Relationships
2. Sensory Problems
3. Oral Motor Development
4. Health
5. Delayed Solids Introduction
What CAUSES picky eating?

1. Emotional/Relationships
   - Changes at home, school, or with friends or family
   - Tension between parent+child or parent+parent

Type of attachment to caregivers

What CAUSES picky eating?

2. Sensory Needs
   - Overstimulation
   - Understimulation
   - Sensory Processing Disorders
What CAUSES picky eating?

3. Oral Motor Development
   - Reflexes not integrated
   - Insufficient practice
   - Poor oral motor function
   - Oral ties
   - Aphasia/Speech Concerns
   - Dysphagia
What CAUSES picky eating?

4. Health
   - Nutritional deficiencies/mineral imbalances
   - Lack of, or limited stomach acid
   - Gut dysbiosis
   - Leaky gut
   - Heavy metal toxicity

What CAUSES picky eating?

5. Delayed Solids Introduction
   - Missed opportunities for exposure to flavor and/or texture
   - Oral motor deficits
   - Reflexes not integrated
The exact same methods that are used for PREVENTING picky eating are also used for REVERSING picky eating.
Preventing picky eating in babies and toddlers

1. 4 Pillars
2. Division of Responsibility
3. Flavor and Texture Windows
4. Benefits of BLW
5. Importance of nutrient-dense foods and variability of foods
4 Pillars of Preventing and Reversing Picky Eating

• Provide diverse sensory experiences
• Provide opportunities to develop oral motor skills
• Use positive relationships and secure attachment
• Introduce solids in a timely way
Division of Responsibility

Caregivers are responsible for: WHAT, WHEN, AND WHERE

Children are responsible for: HOW MUCH and WHETHER
Division of Responsibility

Caregivers are responsible for:

- Shopping, cooking, preparing the food
- Providing consistent meals and snacks
- Model table manners and eating skills
- Be understanding and patient. Our kids are still learning feeding skills

www.ellynsatterinstitute.org/how-to-feed/the-division-of-responsibility-in-feeding/
Division of Responsibility

Children are responsible for:

• Eating, if they choose to
• Eating the amount that is appropriate for their bodies (intuitive eating)
• Eat the same foods their caregivers eat
• Learn appropriate table manners
Flavor and Texture Windows

• flavor window: 4-6 months
• texture window: 6-10 months

Benefits of BLW

- oral motor development
- chewing practice
- sensory input
Importance of Nutrient-Dense Foods & Variety

- bone broth/meat stocks
- ferments
- organ meats
- meats, seafood
- animal fats
10 Mistakes That Can Lead To Negative Food Associations

- Constantly wiping baby’s face and hands during the meal.
- Making negative comments about how much food you or your child ate.
- Having the child eat alone or away from you at the table.
- Praising the child for taking another bite.
- Encouraging or forcing a child to eat while they are sick or teething.
10 Mistakes That Can Lead To Negative Food Associations

- Encouraging a child to eat after they have indicated they are finished eating.
- Yelling or arguing with other family members at the table.
- Tricking a child into opening their mouth.
- Putting your fingers in the child’s mouth to pull food out.
- Using food as a reward.
Reversing Picky Eating

1. Establish a mealtime routine
   - sitting at a table
   - no electronics
   - create a rhythm
   - focus on connection

2. Establish a mealtime schedule
   - avoid grazing all day
   - refrain from snacking right before a meal
   - hungry children EAT!
   - create consistent meal times
Constant exposure, constant exposure, constant exposure. Research shows that kids need 15-20 exposures to a food before they will begin to accept it. Parents give up after 3-5x of offering.

Difference between:
- familiar foods
- learning foods
- safe foods

1. Paul Dazeley, Carmel Houston-Price, Exposure to foods' non-taste sensory properties. A nursery intervention to increase children's willingness to try fruit and vegetables, Appetite, Volume 84, 2015, Pages 1-6.
Constant exposure paired with variability. Instead of just serving raw carrots, serve roasted carrots, mashed carrots, carrots in a stew, carrots in a soup, etc.
Reversing Picky Eating

6. Refrain from negatively labeling children, especially repeating this label in front of them.

7. Avoid pressuring, coaxing, bribing, or threatening to eat foods. Focus on positive relationships and attachment. Shame and guilt put the nervous system in a “freeze” state, we cannot eat when we are not regulated and the body is in a sympathetic state.


Reversing Picky Eating

8 Avoid being a short order cook! Everyone eats the same meal, no meal is different.  
   - Meal variations can be made based on healing protocols or severe picky eating.

9 Serve small portions of food. Full plates can look overwhelming to children and create more food waste.
10. Avoid packaged foods and foods with excessive sugar. These foods can trick your child’s palate into craving more and thinking that is what real food looks and tastes like.

11. Model, model, model! Model eating real, whole foods at mealtimes.

12. Avoid kid menus at restaurants. Kid menu food is not real food!

Summary of Reversing Picky Eating

1. Start with establishing a consistent mealtime routine.
2. Establish a consistent mealtime schedule (limit snacks).
3. Work on slowly introducing foods—consistent exposure paired with variability.
4. Follow the Division of Responsibility.
5. Reduce and eliminate all processed foods as much as possible.
Work with me!

www.nourishthelittles.com

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Questions & Answers