

Picky Toddlers



Steps For Prevention of Food Wars!

- Toddlers require fewer calories per pound of body weight and, therefore, less food after their first birthday. Growth rate slows down—only one tenth of what it was when they were babies.
- Recognize that your child doesn't have the same eating pattern as you and that his/her pattern varies from day to day. His/her appetite also varies, just as yours does. He/she may not appear interested or hungry at breakfast, eating a few bites of cereal, but devour three helpings of food at dinner. Follow his/her lead and respect his/her hunger cues.
- Involve the toddler in food buying and preparation to increase his/her interest in food. Give him/her simple tasks like washing carrots or tearing lettuce.
- Make sure your toddler always eats at the table or in the high chair. Picky eaters want to graze all over the place.
- Eliminate as many distractions as possible at mealtimes.
- Avoid giving your toddler too many choices. Keep the menu and the look of his/her plate simple.
- If giving choices, limit them to two. Toddlers reject foods so they can control decision-making.
- Avoid overwhelming your toddler with too much food. Keep portions small. Use the One Tablespoon Rule—serve 1 tablespoon of each food for each year of the child's age. You can always add small amounts as wanted.

Coping With the Picky Toddler

- Toddlers commonly go on food jags and want the same food day after day. Go with it; it will run its course. It won't hurt if your toddler is deficient in a few food groups for a few weeks. Toddlers try to establish independence or get attention. After a few weeks, vary the favorite food or menu slightly.
- Avoid feeding your toddler too often. Spacing meals and snacks at specific intervals is important so he/she will feel hungry. Some toddlers may fill up at one meal and cruise until empty.
- Serve simple foods to keep flavors fresh and true.

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- Know it's OK if your child leaves food on his/her plate.
- Never force, pressure, or bribe your child to clean his/her plate. Stop the "disease to please." Toddlers have small tummies and short attention spans. When your child is hungry, he/she will eat. They should NEVER be expected to eat to please you.
- Expect your toddler to object, reject, or complain about new or all food on his/her plate. Keep serving new food periodically, so you do not contribute to his/her pickiness.
- Toddlers may consistently refuse certain types of foods. Respect his/her preferences, if they are strong and few. Remember, you don't like everything either.
- Introduce a sample of a new food when your toddler is hungriest. Offer only one new food at a time.
- Serve a variety of easy to manage foods, but never bribe and do not create a power struggle if your child refuses to eat.
- Relax. Pushing your child to eat gives him/her negative attention and increases pickiness. Worrying only makes things worse.