

HELPING THE PICKY EATER

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Before the Meal

1. Provide input to body as directed by SLP or OT such as:
 - Brushing program/Wilbarger Protocol
 - Oral motor program 20 minutes before eating
 - Listening Program
2. Use vibrating toothbrush to increase input to mouth
3. Chew on hard pretzels/taffy/jerky/raw carrots to increase resistance and tone
4. Drink thick milk shakes and smoothies through crazy straw.
5. Participate in gross motor activity about 30-45 minutes before eating (swinging, bouncing, rocking, jumping on trampoline)

Feeding Tips for All Children

Offer small portions (a tablespoon) to start

Don't ask a child what he wants and don't be a short-order cook

Don't fight about food or set up power struggles

Offer foods that are nutritious and developmentally appropriate

Lightly cook or steam raw fruits and vegetables to aid digestion

Do not have the TV on during snack or mealtimes

Encourage children to help prepare or serve food

Have family meals, pleasant conversation and environment

Don't let child eat same thing multiple meals/days in a row...we don't want them to get tired of it, and then that's one less thing they will eat

Don't serve in packaging..serve on your dishes.

Things to try with Picky Eaters

1. Introduce one new food/week. Everyone in house eats it and makes a big deal how good it is. Use preferred food as a reward (e.g., one bite of ___ and then preferred item)
2. TONS of positive reinforcement for exploring new things...don't provide negative reinforcement for not eating..don't want eating to be associated with anything negative.
3. Play around with physical space: flowers, natural light or dim light
4. Music in the background. Something with regular rhythm and appropriate tempo (nothing too fast or slow). Increases the regularity of firing of impulses into the musculature. Something they don't know/can't sing to..don't want to distract from task of eating, but something they will enjoy or not be unhappy by. (e.g., jazz, classical music).
5. Big hugs, smoosh in pillows, or bath before eating. Try eating while sitting in bean bag chair or with a weighted blanket to give extra input to hips and shoulders. ****Make sure feet are on the floor/block and are not kicking around while eating..ankles and hips at 90 degree angle.
6. Environmental changes: music (see above), no TV in background
7. Provide food with lots of big flavors (e.g. salty, bitter, sour).
8. Present food as an appetizer..maybe with toothpicks that the whole family can enjoy.
9. Present new or tough foods first, with easier to eat items making up the rest of the meal.

Create a Reward Chart: Food Hierarchy

My food is _____.

Fill the chart to earn a prize!

Smell It 			
Touch It 			
Kiss It 			
Taste It 			
Chew It 			
Swallow It 			

Strategies to Expand Children's Diets

- Make a list of the foods and drinks the child will accept (Type of food: fruit, veggie, dairy, meat, Temperature, Color, Hard/Soft, other characteristics)...try to come up with patterns
- Make **small, gradual** changes as new food are introduced. (e.g., a different brand of a food they like, different shape of pasta, different variety of cheese/sauce, etc., same type but different color, blended instead of whole, etc.)
- Introduce a different type of food that has something in common with a food in their repertoire...like both sweet, both crunchy, both pink, etc.
- Increase comfort with new textures and foods through play Keep food play separate from meal time
- Build acceptance through gradual, repeated exposure
- Expose children to a variety of foods without an expectation of eating (see Food Hierarchy)
- Build interest and involvement with food and mealtime without expectation of eating
- Think of creative ways of increasing calories and nutrition: add ins to smoothies, sprinkle things onto accepted foods, dips and sauces, butter and salt!
- Talk about the food using your senses: How it looks (shape, color), how it smells (big smell, little smell, smells like ____), how feels, how it tastes (big v. small taste)