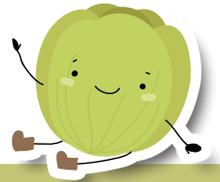


# Raising a Well-Rounded Eater

## Tips for parents who struggle with children who are Picky Eaters!

Every child is unique and not all tips and tactics to encourage your children to consume a wide variety of foods at a young age will work. It takes time, patience and creativity to introduce new foods to your children that are good for them and ones they might enjoy. But first things first, don't dwell on the fact that your child is a *picky eater* and don't use that label when you are talking to them. The last thing a child needs is to be labeled as a *picky eater*. In the end, they might use that as an excuse not to try new foods in the future. Try these tips below to help introduce your children to new foods and flavors, but understand, they might not all work for you and your family, but they are worth a try. Our goal as your Supermarket Registered Dietitians for Coborn's is to provide you with resources so that you and your child can develop a positive relationship with food and family meals. We want our tips and tools to be as realistic and individualized as possible to meet your needs.



**1** Meal times should be centered around positive attitudes and positive conversation. Talk about your day. What good things happened? What are you doing tomorrow? What upcoming activities can you do together as a family?

**2** Division of responsibility. As a parent, you are responsible for *what* is offered for the meal, *where* the meal will take place, and *when* the meal will take place. That's it. The child is responsible for *what* they choose to eat (from what is offered) and *if they choose to eat* at all. It's important to be respectful of your child's appetite, or lack of one. If they choose not to eat, you are still responsible for what and when the next meal will consist of. Your children won't let themselves go hungry, but it will take time for them to learn and understand the division of responsibility as well as identify their inner hunger scale.

**3** Serve the same foods to everyone at meal times. Your life is busy enough, you don't have time to make two separate meals. By everyone being offered the same foods at meal times, adults can be positive role models for their children. Once children are offered "special meals" they will expect them from there on out.

**4** Deconstruct the food. You can still have the same foods and make them more appealing for a child. The easiest thing you can do is deconstruct the meal into individual components. For example, instead of serving them a bowl of spaghetti and sauce with meatballs, separate out each ingredient and allow the child to choose which, if any components of the meal he/she will choose to eat.

**5** Give your child simple, but fair choices with meals. I think it is fair to say children like to feel empowered, and that is no different when it comes to meals. As a parent, the way you phrase your question is key. For example, "Do you want green beans or carrots with dinner?" This gives the child only two options. Whereas, if we ask "Do you want green beans for dinner?" a child can just say no! Be sure to phrase questions correctly giving your child the opportunity to take part in the decisions for meals and snacks.

**6** Get your children involved in the process. Giving them choices, like mentioned above, is a great start. Allowing children to be actively involved in the shopping or preparation process will allow them to feel more invested.

Once they feel they are a part of the process, children are more likely to try new foods. Children can get involved in many ways: helping wash produce, stirring, helping meal plan for the week, picking out healthy snacks at the store, and growing produce in their own garden are just a few ideas. Check out the back of this handout for additional ideas for how kids can be more involved at any age!

**7** When introducing new foods to a child, allow them to explore the food. What does it look like, smell like, etc. These new foods may also be well accepted if they are the first foods they try at the meal. Be sure that the other components of their meals and snacks are items that are familiar to them. We want them to feel comfortable. If they do try it, praise them, and keep a positive attitude. Studies show that it may take up to 15+ times to introduce a new food in new ways until it is accepted by the child. Be patient, it will all work out. But, understand that you don't like all foods either. So, it may just be a food that they won't like, and that's okay, too!

**8** Start with smaller portions. We would hate to throw away a large portion of it if they didn't like it. This will help you save a couple of dollars, because throwing away food is practically throwing money in the garbage. By starting with a smaller portion, the child can ask for more if he/she enjoys it, plus, it is less intimidating.

**9** Make food fun! It's okay to play with your food a little. It gives the children an opportunity to explore and be more involved in the preparation process prior to eating. Make lady bugs out of apple slices or make a bear on a piece of toast with bananas and raisins. Let their imagination run wild!



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# Kitchen Activities For Children of All Ages

Young children are full of curiosity and love to learn. Around the age of 2, children can start to help in the kitchen. Studies have shown that children who are involved in the food preparation process are more likely to try new foods. As children get older, they can build on their current kitchen knowledge and skills. Below are some suggestions as to how you can engage your children in the kitchen at any age.

## Age 2

- Identify foods by their name
- Identify colors of foods
- Wipe down tables
- Assist with handing items to an adult to be put away after shopping
- Bring things to the trash
- Assist with a cook book by turning the pages (when asked 😊)
- Create fun creatures and faces with fruits and vegetables
- Wash fruits and vegetables under running water

## Age 3 } Everything a 2-year-old can do, plus:

- Add ingredients to a recipe
- Have conversations about cooking
- Scoop or mash ingredients (graham crackers, mashed potatoes, etc.)
- Stir batter
- Knead dough
- Count foods and ingredients
- Help assemble foods (such as pizza, sandwiches, etc)

## Age 4 } Everything a 3-year-old can do, plus:

- Peel foods such as hard-boiled eggs, bananas, cuties, etc.
- Set the table
- Crack an egg
- Measure dry ingredients
- Assemble more complex foods, such as larger salads, help with lasagna, etc

## Age 5 } Everything a 4-year-old can do, plus:

- Measure out liquid ingredients
- Cut soft fruits and vegetables, (such as bananas) with kid-friendly utensils.
- Help push buttons on a food processor
- Scoop batter into muffin tins
- Help meal plan
- Help pack their lunch for school

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