

Picky Eaters & How to Handle Them

Normal Behaviors:

- Can't sit still (for very long)
- Plays with their food (makes a mess)
- Refuses to try new foods (wants same food all the time)
- Refuses to eat
- Wants to feed self
- Eats a lot one day & not much the next
- Wants something else (than what is served)
- Wants food a certain way (not touching, cut a certain way)
- Likes a food one day and not the next
- Turns head, pushes spoon away, cries, makes faces (baby)

Children behave these ways because they are:

- Learning about their world,
- Testing their limits
- Trying to be independent
- Developing muscle coordination so often messy with food.
- Playing with food might mean they are done eating.
- Babies behave these ways when they are full or deciding if they like the new food.

Ways to Manage Behaviors:

1. What to serve:
 - Parent decides what healthy foods to serve.
 - Don't be a short order cook.
 - Offer one well liked food per meal.
 - Child decides how much – small servings. Don't force/bribe.
2. When to serve it:
 - Have a routine of meals and snacks, about every 2-3 hours so child knows when to expect to eat.
 - Avoid snacks and drinks too close to mealtime.
 - Bottle/cup all day-takes appetite.
 - Infants should be fed on demand; starts to change around 1 year of age.
3. Where to eat:
 - Avoid distraction (TV, toys).
 - In a high chair or at the table.
 - Transition time (music, story, set the table or help food preparation activities).
4. Whether or not to eat:
 - OK to skip meal; make up for it at the next meal.
 - After 1 year old, appetite decreases because rate of growth decreases
 - New foods: may need to try a new food 10x+ before accepting; encourage but don't force, OK to try and remove food from mouth