

## Occupational Therapy

### General Suggestions for Picky Eaters

- 1) Eat at the Table - Eat meals at the table as a family as often as possible. This allows your child to see others eating the food. It also gives opportunities to see, and smell the food.
- 2) One Meal - Do not become a short order chef. Instead try to make sure that at least one food for each family meal is something your child will eat. Make sure at other times that there are planned meals that your child will enjoy.
- 3) Offer the food - Offer a very small portion of the new or less preferred food on the plate or bowl, or in a separate plate or bowl from your child's other food. If your child is no longer offered a food because they have not eaten it in the past, they have no opportunity to explore the food now!
- 4) Food Exposure – It takes many exposures to a new food for some children to try the food. Try to include many opportunities for your child to interact with the food. Think of chances for you child to see, smell, touch the food. Depending on your child's skills, consider:
  - Having your child put food into the shopping cart
  - Having your child put ingredients into the mixing bowl or pot when baking or preparing a meal
  - Having your child assist in serving the meal (e.g. helping to scoop food into serving bowls, taking bowls to the table, passing bowls of food, taking plates of food to the table, etc)
  - Having your child help clean up (e.g. taking their plate to the kitchen counter when all done, if tolerated scrapping the food scraps into a bowl or organics bin, take bowls of leftover food off the table, etc.)
  - Many children enjoy being helpers. These food exposure opportunities may be more acceptable to your child as there is NO expectation of them eating the food at these times.
- 5) Food Exploration – Other ways to increase your child's interactions with food is to allow for food exploration and play.
  - This may include taking about the food and food properties. "This carrot is crunchy. I can make a big crunch!"(Then take a bite.) "I can make the grape pop. Watch me take a big bite!" "This apple is juicy." "What a red strawberry. It is really sweet!"
  - Try finger painting in yogurt, or just allowing your child to squish, squeeze, and see / smell / touch new foods.
  - You can consider an eating plate and an exploring plate at meals. The foods that are new or not yet eaten go on the exploring plate.

Child: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Therapist: \_\_\_\_\_ Phone: \_\_\_\_\_

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- 6) Consider the Sensory Impact – Some children are more sensitive to the look of food or smell of food. For these children having bowls of food on the table may be too over whelming. Instead bring the plates of food to the table. Try to have no more than three types of food on the plates and avoid too much food on the plate at one time. Make a habit of offering second helpings of foods so that your child knows that they can have more food if they want it.
  
- 7) Remember food amounts – Serving sizes for toddlers and preschoolers are small. See Canada's Food Guide.
  
- 8) Milk and Juice – Some children fill up on milk or juice through the day and are not hungry at meal time. We are all less likely to try new food or eat less when we are not hungry. Canada's Food Guide recommends ONLY 2 cups of milk every day (serving size for 1 to 3 year old = ½ cup, serving size for 4 to 5 year olds = ¾ cup)