



Mealtime Tips Parent Tips

Fussy eaters can be aggravating and worrisome for parents. Food is fuel for the human body. Good choices are necessary for proper growth. So, what do we do with those picky eaters? Try these ideas to help your finicky eater and improve mealtime at your house.

- **Make one meal for the whole family.** Becoming a short order cook on the whim of a fussy eater is not beneficial for the child and will leave the parent frazzled. Children are not entitled to choose a dinner selection that's different from the family every night.
- **Have a "One Bite Rule".** Whether a food is new or not a favorite, encourage children to try something novel and to give others a second, third or seventh chance. It may take a number of times to develop a taste for certain foods.
- **Involve children in meal preparations.** Learning kitchen "how-tos" and seeing the work involved in making healthy meals will encourage your child to eat. When a child can say, "I helped!" it's incentive to take a bite.
- **Choose interesting, colorful foods.** Make the meal a feast for the eyes and the palate.
- **Vary the preparation.** If cooked carrots tend to wrinkle your child's nose, try serving the carrots raw with dip.
- **Give foods a new, fun name.** When my sister's children were little, they called broccoli "trees"! My children thought it was cool and ate "trees" with gusto.
- **Get in the habit of offering healthy choices for the whole family, Mom and Dad included.** When only good choices are available, any option will be a good one.
- **Drink milk and water.** Soda pop is not a good choice, period. There's too much sugar, tummies get filled too quickly, calcium and phosphorus are lost, and the risk of dental decay is higher. All are good reasons to skip soft drinks completely. Limit juice too.
- **Last resort: bread and butter.** For those determined little rascals, bread with butter is a final option. "Breakfast is in the morning" is a reasonable response. Children will not starve overnight. If they are hungry, they will eat something on the dinner table.
- **Close the kitchen.** If snacks are an option before bedtime, children don't need to eat dinner.
- **Be a good role model.** Try new foods and give foods you haven't liked in the past a chance.
- **Enjoy mealtime as a family.** The dinner table is the best place for family members to connect after a busy day.

Questions? Contact Becky Danielson at b.danielson@berrypatchschool.com.