



10 Tips for Parents of Picky Eaters

PICKY EATING is often the norm for toddlers. After the rapid growth of infancy, when babies usually triple in weight, a toddler's growth rate—and appetite—tends to slow down.

Toddlers are also beginning to develop food preferences, a fickle process. A toddler's favorite food one day may hit the floor the next, or a snubbed food might suddenly become the one he or she can't get enough of. For weeks, they may eat 1 or 2 preferred foods—and nothing else.

Try not to get frustrated by this typical toddler behavior. Just make healthy food choices available and know that, with time, your child's appetite and eating behaviors will level out. In the meantime, here are some tips that can help you get through the picky eater stage.

1 Family Style Dining. Share a meal together as a family as often as you can. This means no media distractions like TV or cell phones at mealtime. Use this time to model healthy eating. Serve one meal for the whole family and resist the urge to make another meal if your child refuses what you've served. This only encourages picky eating. Try to



include at least one food your child likes with each meal and continue to provide a balanced meal, whether she eats it or not.

2 Avoid Food Fights. If your toddler refuses a meal, avoid fussing over it. It's good for children to learn to listen to their bodies and use hunger as a guide. If they ate a big breakfast or lunch, for example, they may not be interested in eating much the rest of the day. It's a parent's responsibility to provide food, and the child's decision to eat it. Pressuring kids to eat or punishing them if they don't, can make them actively dislike foods they may otherwise like.

(continued on page 2)

DID YOU KNOW...

- In the South, it's traditional to eat black eyed peas and greens on New Year's Day for good health, prosperity and luck in the new year.
- World Belly Laugh Day is January 24th
- Laughter enhances your intake of oxygen-rich air, stimulates your heart, lungs and muscles, and increases the endorphins that are released by your brain.
- January is National Birth Defects Prevention Month.
- A baby is born with a birth defect every 4½ minutes, that is 120,000 babies affected each year. Not all birth defects can be prevented.
- Women who could become pregnant should consume 400 micrograms of folic acid everyday by eating fortified foods such as grains, pastas and breakfast cereals to help prevent serious birth defects of the brain and spine.

*Bellylaughday.com,
fruitsandveggiesmatters.org,
Centers for Disease Control and
Prevention*

Quotable Quotes

“We all eat, and it would be a sad waste of opportunity to eat badly.”

– Anna Thomas

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— Continued from front page

3 Take a Break from Bribes. Tempting as it may be, try not to bribe your children with treats for eating other foods. This can make the “prize” food even more exciting, and the food you want them to try an unpleasant chore. It can also lead to nightly battles at the dinner table.

4 Try, Try Again. Just because a child refuses a food once, don't give up. Keep offering new foods and those your child didn't like before. It can take as many as 10 or more times tasting a food before a toddler's taste buds accept it. Scheduled meals and limiting snacks can help ensure your child is hungry when a new food is introduced.

5 Vary the Spice. Offer a variety of healthy foods, especially vegetables and fruits and include higher protein foods like meat and deboned fish at least 2 times per week. Help your child explore new flavors and textures in food. Try adding different herbs and spices to simple meals to make them tastier. To minimize waste, offer new foods in small amounts and wait at least a week or two before reintroducing the same food.

6 Make Food Fun. Toddlers are especially open to trying foods arranged in eye-catching, creative ways. Make foods look irresistible by arranging them in fun, colorful shapes kids can recognize. Kids this age also tend to enjoy any food involving a dip. Finger foods are also usually a hit with toddlers. Cut solid foods into bite size pieces they can easily eat themselves, making sure the pieces are small enough to avoid the risk of choking.

7 Involve Kids in Meal Planning. Put your toddler's growing interest in exercising control to good use. Let your child pick which fruit and vegetable to make for dinner or during visits to the grocery store or farmer's market. Read kid-friendly cookbooks together and let your child pick out new recipes to try.

8 Encourage Tiny Chefs. Some cooking tasks are perfect for toddlers (with lots of supervision, of course): sifting, stirring, counting ingredients, picking fresh herbs from a garden or windowsill and “painting” on cooking oil with a pastry brush, to name a few.



9 Crossing Bridges. Once a food is accepted, use what nutritionists call “food bridges” to introduce others with similar color, flavor and texture to help expand variety in what your child will eat. If your child likes pumpkin pie, for example, try mashed sweet potatoes and then mashed carrots.

10 A Fine Pair. Try serving unfamiliar foods or flavors young children tend to dislike at first (sour and bitter), with familiar foods toddlers naturally prefer (sweet and salty). Pairing broccoli (bitter) with grated cheese (salty), for example, is a great combination for toddler taste buds.

REMEMBER...

If you are concerned about your child's diet, talk with your pediatrician, who can help troubleshoot and make sure your child is getting all the necessary nutrients to grow and develop. Also keep in mind that picky eating usually is a normal developmental stage for toddlers. Do your best to patiently guide them on their path toward healthy eating.

— www.healthychildren.org

KIDS' HEALTH & SAFETY

Laugh for Your Health

A GOOD LAUGH has great short-term effects. When you start to laugh, it doesn't just lighten your load mentally, it actually induces physical changes in your body, stimulating your organs, relieving your stress response and soothing tension. Laughter is good for you over the long term as well and may improve your immune system, relieve pain, increase personal satisfaction and improve your mood!



Nourish children's growth, development, health and sense of well-being.

Humor in children has been correlated with higher intelligence, creativity, sociability, empathy, self-esteem and problem solving, according to Louis Franzini, Ph.D.

According to Dr. Bob Arnot, "Children are so receptive to a smile that if a parent could make just one change in a thirty day

period to vastly improve their parenting style, he would suggest smiling more often at their children and offering more hugs and affection." Brian Tracy writes in *Million Dollar Habits*, "The simplest way to express acceptance of another person is simply to smile each time you see him or her."

Social benefits of laughter include the fostering of emotional connections, the creation of positive bonds, the promotion of team work and conflict resolution as well as uniting people during difficult times.

WAKE UP LAUGHING

- Wake up with a smile
- The minute your feet hit the floor, smile some more
- The first time you look at yourself in the mirror smile, giggle, medium laugh, laugh heartily to wake up your laugh
- Greet the people you meet with a high five and say "It's a Belly Laugh Day! Ha, ha, ha, ha, ha..."

Whether you're guffawing at a sitcom on TV or quietly giggling at a newspaper cartoon, laughing does you good. Laughter is a great form of stress relief, and that's no joke.

— adapted from bellylaughday.com and the Mayo Clinic

A GOOD HEARTY LAUGH CAN...

- Boost positive energy, creativity and connection
- Boost immune function
- Exercise facial, abdominal and chest muscles
- Oxygenate the blood
- Improve brain function
- Increase alertness
- Change our mood
- Boost positive emotions
- Increase pain tolerance

Find a way to laugh about your own situations and watch your stress begin to fade away. Even if it feels forced at first, practice laughing. It does your body good.

A SENSE OF HUMOR CAN...

- Improve your heart health by increasing blood flow which lowers your risk for blood clots and heart disease
- Fuel positive energy, connection and creativity
- Transform situations during challenging times
- Arouse curiosity and increase engagement in divergent or creative thinking

New Year's Black Eyed Pea Soup

Black eyed peas, dried..... 1 pound	Chicken or vegetable stock... 6 cups
Olive oil 1 Tbsp	Smoked paprika..... 1 Tbsp
Onion, diced..... 1	Bay leaf..... 1
Celery, diced..... 2 stalks	Thyme, fresh..... 2 sprigs
Carrots, diced..... 3	Tomatoes, diced, fire roasted..... 1 (14 oz) can
Garlic clove, finely chopped..... 1	Kale (or collard greens), roughly chopped..... 3 cups
Smoked ham, cubed (or ham bone, optional) ... 1 cup	Salt and pepper..... to taste

1. Soak the black eyed peas in water overnight, then drain and rinse.
2. In a slow cooker pot add all ingredients except for greens, salt and pepper. Cook on low for 8 hours or high for 4 hours.
3. Add the greens in the last 30 minutes to 1 hour of cooking time.
4. Remove the thyme sprigs and bay leaves. Season with salt and pepper.

Yield: 10 servings

Meets requirement for meat/meat alternate and vegetable.

— *Bowlsofdelicious.com*

Healthy Broccoli Casserole

Olive oil 2 Tbsp	Flour..... 6 Tbsp
Onion, chopped..... 1 medium	Milk..... 3 cups
Red bell pepper, chopped... 1 medium	Cheddar cheese, shredded .. ¼ cup
Mushrooms, sliced..... 8 ounces	Parmesan cheese, grated ¼ cup
Salt ½ tsp	Broccoli florets, frozen..... 2 (12.6 ounce) pkgs
Pepper ¼ tsp	

1. Preheat oven to 350°F. Lightly spray a 9 x 13 inch pan with cooking spray.
2. Heat oil in large skillet over medium-high heat. Add onion, bell pepper, mushrooms, salt and pepper. Cook until vegetables are soft and lightly browned.
3. Sprinkle flour over vegetables. Cook for 1 minute. Slowly add milk and bring to a boil. Stir frequently. Cook about 3 minutes until mixture starts to thicken and is smooth.
4. Remove from heat. Stir in cheeses and broccoli. Pour into prepared pan.
5. Bake uncovered for 40 minutes.

Yield: 12 servings

Meets requirement for vegetable.

— *Plainchicken.com*

ACTIVITY CORNER

Belly Laugh Energy Recipe

Mix a batch of playful laughs and smiles with glee.

On the count of three. **1, 2, 3...**

- 1 Poppity pop, pop open your smile.
Touch your left hand to your right knee.
Laugh hee hee hee hee hee,
as you raise your left arm to the sky.
Smile. Lower your left arm.
Touch your right hand to your left knee.
Laugh ha ha ha ha ha ha,
as you raise your right arm to the sky.
Go Ahead. Smile. Lower your right arm.
Raise both arms to the sky. Laugh ho ho ho with gusto.
- 2 Smile. Press your laugh rewind key and laugh
ha ha ha, hee hee hee, ho ho ho backward –
ah ah ah, eeh eeh eeh, oh oh oh!
- 3 Smile. Press your laugh fast forward key and laugh
Ha ha ha, hee hee hee, ho ho ho really fast.

— *Adapted from-Bellylaughday.com*

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Food **Q.** What is a pretzel's favorite dance?
Funny **A.** The Twist!