



# Tips for Picky Eating

Community Health of Central Washington

## WHAT IS IT?

- **Most kids go through stages of being picky about food.** Usually between the ages of 1 and 3, kids begin to express independence (and try to become their own person) about many things including food.
- **Kids are often unsure or even afraid to try new foods.**

## WHAT CAN I DO ABOUT IT?

- **Offer different food choices**, including one food your child likes at each meal.
- **Offer new kinds of foods often.** Children may need to be offered a new food as many as **10-15 times** before they will try it. <sup>1</sup>
- **Include your child while cooking.** They can drop cut up fruit into the bowl, help stir, or rinse veggies.
- **Try a rewards chart for trying new foods.** Often children need help to try new foods. Start small, setting your child up for success. For example: your child needs 2 stickers to receive a reward, if your child tries a new food twice in that week then they would get a reward. Your child will get excited and want to continue to try since they were able to succeed in the first week. Gradually increase amount of stickers needed to receive a reward.



## MORE IDEAS

- **Provide small, healthy snacks between meals**, do not allow your child to fill up during snack time because that may lower their appetite for meals.
- **Do not prepare a separate meal for your child.** This can encourage picky eating behaviors.
- **Set a good example.** If your child sees their parent eating a variety of foods, they are more likely to follow your example.
- **Focus on the meal! Limit distractions.** Turn off the phone, the TV and other electronics during meals. This can help your child focus on eating.
- **Don't offer dessert as a reward.** Using dessert as a reward can teach your child that dessert is the best part of the meal, which could increase your child's desire for sweets.
  - **Redefine dessert**, as fruit, yogurt or other healthy choices.
  - **For more help...Contact your doctor and/or BHC. They can help you today!**

## References

1. <https://www.zerotothree.org/resources/1072-how-to-handle-picky-eaters>

Helpful  
Tips