

## **PICKY EATERS: HOW DO I GET MY KID TO EAT VEGETABLES?**

Altos Pediatrics Associates

"I counsel parents not to worry too much about eating vegetables especially if the child is less than five years old, I don't think it's healthy to make eating food a battle, and many children's teeth simply are not involved enough to like the flavor of vegetable. As they get older those taste buds develop and developmentally they are more [able] to understand how important it is to eat vegetable[s]. Many young children will eat fruit, however. I recommend that children try to eat a rainbow of colors."

Ravenswood Family Health Center

Ask if they eat fruits. If they do, emphasize and encourage that. Often there will be one vegetable they are willing to eat, and we brainstorm how to incorporate that vegetable into many meals. Recommends having the child snack on this vegetable prior to getting full meal.

Santa Clara Valley Medical Center

"Don't give up." Keep introducing a variety of vegetables. Set good examples. Reinforcement is important for children. There is a '5 Keys Class', offered in Santa Clara County that emphasizes a variety of lessons developed by Ellyn Satter, including "Division of Responsibility". Lastly, normalizing that many children go through this can help families feel less overwhelmed.

Kaiser Permanente

If children are incredibly reluctant, start trying to hide veggies in other meals. Suggest smoothies. In many cases, a Nutrition consult can help with learning variety. Reassure families that they will be OK, and that many strategies can help. Tell families it is OK to add cheese/butter/salt to get vegetables in. If there is an extreme case, you can also ask questions about textures or consistencies. There are feeding classes or other health education on that can help get at the root of a greater problem.

Gardner Packard Children's Health Center (1)

- Use the colors: I often talk about the colors of the rainbow and how it's important to have one vegetable of every color. I have them pick one that they will try the next week. For example, what color do you want to try? Orange? Ok, what do you want to try that is orange? Then I encourage the parents and kids to pick a new color each week and promise to try a veggie in that new color. It makes it a little more fun for the kids. The next time they come for a visit, I ask them which colors they tried.
- Persistence: I mention that they need to try foods multiple times before they start to like them especially if it is a younger kid. Sometimes parents don't realize that they may need to try a food 8-10 times before they start to like it.

- Kiss goodbye: One trick I learned from OT is to have them put the food on the plate and then have them kiss it goodbye even if they don't take a bite. I explain to the parents that the idea is to have their mouth come into contact with the food and as they get used to the taste, the parent can encourage them to eventually take a lick and then finally to take a bite.
- Set a good example: It's hard to get kids to eat veggies if parents aren't eating them.
- Add some flavor: Some kids do better with a little bit of flavor like cinnamon or lemon. A parent can try to get a little creative, maybe even ask the child what they want to add to it to make it taste better.
- Hide it: This is controversial. I explain to parents that ideally, the child would know they were eating the vegetable but when they are in a tough situation or the kids are at that age where you cannot negotiate, I give the parents ideas on how to hide the veggies. For example, smoothies, french toast, pancakes, blended sauces, soups etc. There's a cookbook called "Deceptively Delicious". I don't love it but it has some ideas on how to cook veggies into food that you usually make so that the kids will eat it. If the child likes the food, have them try to guess what was in it. They will be so proud of themselves when they learn that they eat zucchini or carrots and that it was yummy, too.

### GPCHC (2)

- Multiple exposures help
- Don't "bribe" kids to try something new – (It must be really awful if I get a treat if I eat this!)

### GPCHC (3)

- Take your child to the farmers market to pick out vegetables.
- Plant a few vegetables in pots at your home.
- Sprinkle a little parmesan cheese on top of vegetables for those who do not like the bitter taste.

Excerpt: A Hidden Cost to Giving Kids Their Vegetables - Caitlin Daniel, New York Times Op-Ed - 2/16/16

*....plenty of poor parents who wished that their children liked healthier food. But developing their children's palates has hidden costs. When I asked her about offering cauliflower 10 times to shape her son's tastes, a poor mother from a town outside Boston said: "No. No. That's a lot of wasted food." This mother faces an uncomfortable choice: She can experiment and risk an empty cupboard, or she can make her food last by serving what her son likes, even if it's not the healthiest and even if she feels guilty about it.*

Full article: [http://mobile.nytimes.com/2016/02/16/opinion/why-poor-children-cant-be-picky-eaters.html?action=click&pgtype=Homepage&ion=CColumn&module=MostEmailed&version=Full&src=me&WT.nav=MostEmailed&referer=http://www.nytimes.com/&\\_r=0](http://mobile.nytimes.com/2016/02/16/opinion/why-poor-children-cant-be-picky-eaters.html?action=click&pgtype=Homepage&ion=CColumn&module=MostEmailed&version=Full&src=me&WT.nav=MostEmailed&referer=http://www.nytimes.com/&_r=0)