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Selective Eaters Nutrition Therapy

Nutrition Therapy for Selective Eaters

Your child may be a “picky” eater or need special routines at meals. The following tips can help promote healthy eating habits.

Tips

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- Offer many different foods, especially fruits and vegetables.
 - Offer new foods along with foods your child already likes to eat.
 - Don't give up if your child won't try foods the first few times they are offered. Many children need to be offered a new food several times before they will eat it. Some children who are especially sensitive to tastes, textures, smells, or new things may need even more chances.
- Show your child that you enjoy eating healthy foods.
- Provide regularly scheduled meals and snacks—young children need three small meals and two or three snacks each day.
- Keep mealtime routines constant. Use the same plates and utensils. Eat at the same place and at the same time.
- Eat together as a family as often as possible.
- Avoid using food as a reward or for behavior management.
- Don't worry if your child is occasionally a picky eater. Remember that it is natural for children to refuse to eat some foods at some times. This is one way to show independence and make decisions.
- Be aware of signs that picky eating may put your child's well-being at risk. Risk signs include:
 - Your child will not eat any foods from one or more food groups.
 - Your child is losing or not gaining enough weight.
 - Family relationships are strained by struggles related to what your child will or will not eat.

If you have concerns about your child's nutrition, contact a registered dietitian (RD) with experience with selective eating and disorders that may influence these kinds of eating habits. RDs often work with children through early intervention programs, WIC, outpatient clinics at children's hospitals, and health departments.

Foods Recommended

Note: The chart shows general recommendations for children without growth problems, major medical concerns, or special dietary limitations. An RD can help tailor this list to your child's needs.

Food Group	Recommended Foods
Milk and Milk Products	Low-fat or fat-free milk Soy milk Nonfat or low-fat yogurt Nonfat or low-fat cheeses
Meat and Other Protein Foods	Tender, well-cooked lean meat, poultry, fish, eggs, or soy foods Nuts and nut butter (these are higher in fat)
Grains	Any Choose whole grains for at least half of each day's grain servings.
Vegetables	Any Include a variety of different-colored vegetables.

Fruits	Any
Fat and Oils	Heart-healthy vegetable oils, such as olive or canola oil.
Notes	