

# Healthy Tips for Picky Eaters:

## Strategies for child care providers

### Family Style meals are good for picky eaters.

The Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP) supports family style meals service where food is offered in serving bowls or dishes. Feeding children in family style meals with peers is effective in helping children:

- Accept and try a greater variety of foods
- Feel in control of their eating
- Reinforce social skills and practice fine motor skills



### Make Food Fun!

Encourage children to eat new foods by making it fun. Try out these creative strategies or check out [www.choosemyplate.gov](http://www.choosemyplate.gov) for more ideas:

- Ask the children to name new veggie or fruit creations
- Plan fun and educational activities such as taste tests when introducing new foods
- Serve dipping sauces with raw fruits and veggies
- Have children create their own trail mixes and name their creations



### Include children in meal preparation and menu selection.

Children learn about food and get excited about tasting food when they help make meals. Let them add ingredients, scrub veggies, or help stir food.

### Participate in mealtime with the children.

Family style meals are good for everyone! The children enjoy the company of the care provider and feel comfortable and relaxed. Adults can model good eating habits, enjoy conversation and a relaxed mealtime, and maintain a pleasant eating environment.

### Offer children choices and variety.

Offering a variety of foods helps children get the nutrients they need from every food group and encourages them to try new foods.



# What you say matters!

What adults say at the table is powerful. Comments at the table give children messages about how much control they have over hunger and satisfaction

## Phrases That Help:

- Phrases that help to point out the sensory qualities of food encourage children to try new foods. Ex. *This is kiwi fruit. It's sweet like a strawberry!*
- Phrases that help children to recognize when he or she is full can prevent overeating. Ex. *Is your stomach telling you that you're full?*
- Phrases that help the child feel like he or she is making the choices. Ex. *Do you like that? Which one is your favorite?*
- Phrases that reward children with attention and kind words. Ex. *We can try these vegetables again another time. Next time would you like to try them raw instead of cooked?*

## Phrases That Hinder:

- Phrases that teach children to eat for your approval can lead to unhealthy behaviors, attitudes and beliefs about food. Ex. *If you do not eat one more bite, I will be mad.*
- Phrases that teach children to ignore fullness. It is better for kids to stop eating when full or satisfied than when all of the food has been eaten. Ex. *You're such a big girl; you finished all your peas.*
- Phrases that imply that the child was wrong to refuse the food. Ex. *See, that didn't taste so bad, did it?*
- Phrases that offer foods, like dessert, in reward for finishing others, like vegetables, makes some foods seem better than others. Getting a food treat when upset teaches children to eat to feel better. Ex. *No dessert until you eat your vegetables.*



For more information on serving meals in your child care center or home contact:

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