



## Challenge of Picky Eater

Very few things cause more frustration, stress and anxiety in parents as picky eater child. Here is good news. Picky eating is normal begin condition. **In most cases the problem is parent's expectation about Child's diet rather than problem with the child. Special diet, expensive medicines or fancy blood tests are not required.** All it needs is 1) Proper understanding about normal developmental changes in children's eating habit and nutrition 2) Reorganizing parent's expectations 3) Proper discipline and behavior change from parents. You see, you need to make more changes in your approach and expectations than change in child's diet.

### Common symptoms:-

- 1) It seems to you that your child doesn't eat enough, is never hungry, or eat only few things.
- 2) This happen most commonly to children between 1-5 yrs of age.
- 3) Your child's energy level normal.
- 4) Your child is growing normally.

**Cause:** You grow fastest in the first year of your life. Many children gain as much as 15 pounds in first year of life. After one year of age your weight gain rate declines. Between 1 and 5 yr of age many children normally only gain 4-5 pounds in a year. They can go 3-4 months without gaining any weight. This is the nature's normal way. Because they are not growing fast they do need fewer calories. Hence their appetite decreases normally between 2 – 5 years of age. To parents it seems that their child has “poor” appetite. Children also start looking taller and thinner toddler than round looking babies. **But this is 100 % normal, hence not a problem. This is how nature has designed our body and growth.**

Kids generally eat as much as they need for growth and energy. Many parents try to force feed their child to eat more than he needs because they fear that his poor appetite might cause poor health or nutrition deficiency.

**This parental perception and their expectation about child's diet is the main root problem which results in to frustration, stress and power struggle between parent and child. Force feeding actually decrease appetite.**

Here is what you can do:

- 1) **Let your child be in charge of how much he should be eating. You be in charge of what he should be eating. This is the bottom line.**
- 2) Most children can use spoon by them self by 15 months of age. Once they know how to feed themselves. Never pick up his spoon and try to trick / encourage child to eat it. **Never feed your child.** If your child is hungry he will feed himself.
- 3) Serve small portion of food--- less than you think he should eat.
- 4) Make mealtime pleasant. Do not make them power struggle or daily scene of frustration.
- 5) Do not extend mealtime. Don't make your child sit at dinner table after the rest of the family is through eating. Do not insist that your child empty the plate.
- 6) If your child does not eat good meal. Do not offer sank, sweet, cookie before next meal time to “tide over” This will only compound the problem. Skipping occasional meal does not cause any harm.
- 7) Limit amount of juice to maximum 6- 8 oz in entire day.
- 8) Limit amount of milk to maximum 14-16 oz in entire day.
- 9) Do not eat sweets, cookies, junk food in between meal time.
- 10) If your child has too many times snacks in day, he will never be hungry. Offer snacks only twice a day.

11) Teach your child to feed himself early. Start finger food at 6 months of age. At 12 months of age let him use spoon. By 15 months he should feed himself completely.

When to worry:

- 1) Child is losing weight or not gained any weight in 6 months.
- 2) Has other symptoms like fever, diarrhea, vomiting.
- 3) **When your child is picky eater, your child should be checked at the office if you are worried about the way your child is acting.**

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