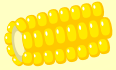


Healthy Eating Tips For Parents of Preschoolers #1



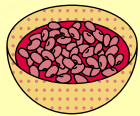
Normal Behaviour

Remember - it is very normal for preschoolers to reject certain foods. It is also very common for parents to worry about whether their child is eating enough. Learning to eat, and to become used to tastes, smells, textures, temperature of food takes time - just as learning to walk took time and practice.



Stay Calm

Try to remain calm and positive if your child does not eat all of their meal. They may be tired or not very hungry. Preschool aged children (for the most part) will not voluntarily starve themselves - a missed or partially eaten meal is not reason to become overly concerned.



Choice and Portion Size

Have a variety of healthy foods in the centre of the table or in the lunchbox where your child can choose what they'd like to eat. If they eat just a little of each food - that's OK - they are still learning about their own food likes and dislikes. Keep portion sizes relatively small. If your child is hungry - they will let you or the teachers at preschool know! This is preferable to overwhelming your child with too much food and setting up the scene for family stress if food remains uneaten.



Introducing New Foods

Research shows that it can take 10-12 exposures to a new food before a child accepts it. Continue to offer a new food alongside a preferred food and don't worry if they don't eat it. "Exposure" may mean looking at, smelling, talking about, feeling or helping prepare the food.



Be a Role Model

Children learn from watching others around them. Try to join with your child at mealtimes keeping the situation calm and positive and modelling healthy eating choices. Chat about things other than food - reinforcing the idea that meal times are enjoyable.



Time Limit and Food Refusal

Set a time limit of about 20-30 minutes for meal times. If food remains uneaten, just calmly take it away and don't offer an alternative meal or snack. Avoid bribing using lollies, sweets or desserts. This just makes children think that these items are better than the meal you are offering, and sets up the likelihood of future food refusal. Using food as a reward or withholding food as a punishment is a fast way to set up a negative association with eating and is to be avoided.



Avoid Unhealthy Snacks or Too Many Drinks

If your child is filling up on too many snacks, drinks of milk or fruit juice, then they may be too full for lunch or dinner. Try to reduce the amount of milk and juice and try water instead. Limit the availability of unhealthy "sometimes food" (treat food). If it's not in the house or out of sight, then it won't become an issue.

