Eliminate “Picky” Eaters!
Preschool children can seem like “picky” eaters. It can take offering preschoolers a food several times before they will try it.1,2 This is normal. Do not label your preschooler as a “picky eater.”1 Here are some tips to get preschoolers interested in trying new foods.

Tips:
- **In the kitchen:** Children involved in preparing foods may be more willing to try (and like!) them.1 Keep a small stool or chair handy so that you can teach preschoolers to:
  - Wash produce
  - Stir foods
  - Arrange fresh fruit and veggie platters
- **At the table:** Relax!
  - Do not force preschoolers to eat1,3
  - Offer new foods first, when preschoolers are hungry2
  - Encourage preschoolers to serve themselves1
  - Keep conversations positive1
  - Enjoy mealtime together1
- **At the grocery store:** Have fun!
  - Ask your preschooler to pick out a few fruits and vegetables to try like peaches, cantaloupe, kiwi, or sweet potatoes
  - While you are at the store, ask the produce manager to tell you about the produce that is in season
- **Outdoors:** Children love to grow their own food—whether it is in a garden or in a pot. Help preschoolers:
  - Plant vegetables
  - Pick vegetables
  - Wash vegetables
  - Put vegetables on the table

Serve it Up Special
Most children do not eat enough of the five food groups: grains, fruits, vegetables, protein, and dairy.4 Use these tips to help “picky eater” preschoolers enjoy trying new foods, in a creative way!

- **In a dish:** Add vegetables to your favorite foods.
  - Make a veggie pizza
  - Add veggies to pastas, soups, tacos, sandwiches, and stir-frys
- **In a beverage:** Smoothies are a fun way to get nutrients from the dairy and fruit groups.
  - Blend frozen fruit, 100% juice and low fat or fat free yogurt
  - Experiment with different fruit and yogurt flavors
- **In a topper:** Preschoolers love to serve themselves. Encourage preschoolers to:
  - Top off cereal or oatmeal with strawberries, blueberries or bananas
Load a baked potato full of the good stuff, like plain yogurt with steamed broccoli and cauliflower
Top a corn tortilla with cheese, lettuce, and tomato
Sprinkle granola over yogurt

**In a salad:** Make a colorful salad.
- Add beans like kidney beans or garbanzo beans
- Sprinkle with low-fat cheese
- Add fruit like mandarin oranges or pineapple for a sweet twist

**In a shape:** Preschoolers enjoy foods in fun shapes. Get creative and have some fun!
- Cut whole wheat bread with a cookie-cutter
- Arrange fruits on a plate in a smiley face
- Make a sailboat out of cheese wedges and crackers

**Popular Preschool Snacks**

Plan 1–2 small, healthy snacks in-between meals every day. Preschoolers usually need to eat every two to three hours.1,3 Offer different snacks every day. Make a grocery list of a variety of healthy and yummy snacks, like these!

**Tips:**
- **In the cupboard:** Keep a stash of healthy snacks in the cupboard.
  - Fruit cups
  - Whole wheat crackers
  - Whole wheat mini bagel
  - Whole wheat tortilla
  - Whole grain cereal
  - Dried fruit
  - 100% fruit leather
  - Peanut butter or other nut butter
- **In the fridge:** Store ready-to-eat healthy snacks in the fridge.
  - Cheese sticks
  - Yogurt cups

**Prevent Choking**1

Children under four should not eat these foods:
- Popcorn
- Nuts
- Seeds
- Chunks of meat or poultry
- Any hard, small, whole foods such as cherry tomatoes, apples, grapes, hard candy, and jelly beans

**Tips:**
- Chop, grapes, meat, poultry, cooked hot dogs and raw fruits and vegetables in small pieces
- Cook hard vegetables

From [www.eatright.org](http://www.eatright.org)

- Low-fat pudding
- Chocolate fat-free milk
- Hard-boiled egg
- Washed produce, like strawberries or diced watermelon
- Canned fruit in its own juice or 100% natural applesauce
- Hummus or other bean dip
- Sliced strips of lean meat or poultry
- **In the freezer:** Keep special (but still healthy!) treats here.
  - 100% fruit bars
  - Low fat frozen yogurt cups

**...and the best tip of all:**

Be a healthy role model! 1,2 Make sure children see you eating healthy foods and being physically active!

Check out more helpful tips from Kids Eat Right and Let’s Move! at [www.kidseatright.org](http://www.kidseatright.org) and [www.letsmove.gov](http://www.letsmove.gov).

**References:**


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